

Hebrew Captives

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Miss Lizzie Carter,
With the author's compliments.

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HEBREW CAPTIVES

OF

THE KINGS OF ASSYRIA,

BY

WH
WILLIAM HENRY GOSS, F.G.S., ETC.

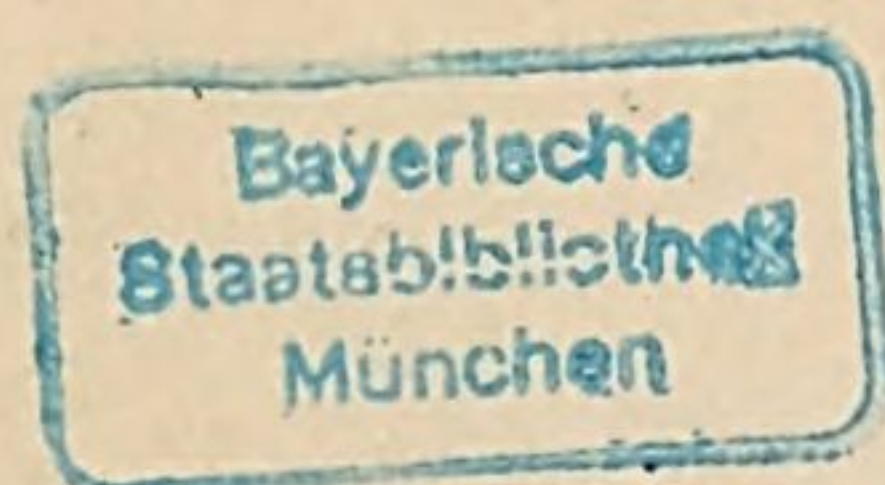
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HEBREW CAPTIVES OF THE KINGS OF ASSYRIA.

CHAPTER I.

NINEVEH IN THE DAYS OF KING SHALMANEZER.—TOBIT'S HOME ON THE BANK OF THE TIGRIS.—HIS SOLILOQUY ON CONTENTMENT.—A GREAT THUNDERSTORM, DURING WHICH AN ASSYRIAN OFFICER SEEKS SHELTER AT THE CAPTIVE'S HOUSE.—DIALOGUE ON RELIGION AND HAPPINESS.

“There are, who, deaf to mad ambition's call,
Would shrink to hear th' obstreperous trump of Fame;
Supremely blest, if to their portion fall
Health, competence, and peace.”

“From labour health, from health contentment springs,
Contentment opes the source of every joy.”—Beattie's *Minstrel*.



WHEN Nineveh was the metropolis of Asia and the residence of the conquerors of the eastern world, there sat one evening beneath his porch on the western bank of the Tigris, a certain Hebrew captive, philosophizing on contentment. It was less than ten years since he had been in the enjoyment of considerable prosperity as a pastoral proprietor in the land of Israel. Now his rich inheritance was permanently occupied by strangers; and himself, his wife, and their son, residing in unredeemable captivity, were dependent for bread upon the produce of a small allotment of land heavily taxed by the government. It was the latter part of the Hebrew month Adar, when all the fresh beauties of a sudden Spring contrasted so pleasantly with the late desolate aspect of Winter and the bitterness of the north wind. The mild breezes now carried abroad the sweets of the narcissus, the hyacinth, and the violet; while the almond, the plum, the apricot, and the peach were in full blossom; and the fields were already robed in the tender green of the rising crops. On the opposite side of the Tigris the gilded and painted domes, towers and obelisks of the queen of cities reflected the glories of the western sky, and the increasing roar of its vast traffic resembled the sound that

reaches the ear on approaching the beach of a rough sea. Magnificent, as approached in the distance, was the view of the imperial city, extending from the margin of the river over the rising land farther than the eye could discern, three days' journey towards the mountains, the whole enclosed within mighty walls fluted and guarded with fifteen hundred lofty towers. The enormous wealth and high civilization of its myriads made it the centre of the world's commerce. Its merchants were princes in a greater degree than were even the merchants of Tyre. Its artizans were the most skilled in the whole world, for whenever its conquering kings went forth to war they sent home to Nineveh the most skilful and most scientific of the inhabitants of the conquered cities. And not only was Nineveh enormously rich by means of its commerce and its manufactures, but it was the receptacle of the world's tribute. And not only did its Kings, when they went forth to chastise rebellion, or extend conquest, send home skilled and learned captives, and gold and silver and precious stones, but also every desirable work of art that could be removed from the cities of the conquered. The boast of Sennacherib alluded to by Isaiah, "I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man: and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth;" was applicable to several previous generations of conquerors. And through these frequent "gatherings" the palaces and temples of Nineveh were actually rich and curious museums, crowded with the rarest productions of art, especially statuary, which they called the gods of the conquered cities. Nahum compared Nineveh to "the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding-place of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid. The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravine." Thus the cost of its immense armies and its government was defrayed by the outer world, and captives of all nations were compelled to labour in the repairs, extensions, fortifications and improvements of this wonderful city, the empress city of the east. And this city—thus enriched with the tribute or spoils of all Asia, beautified by the greatest architects and sculptors of the recent ages, at the will of despots more powerful than the builders of the Pyramids, inheriting the accumulated experiences and improvements and labours of a thousand years, and among whose garrison were included one hundred and twenty thousand warriors who knew not the difference between their right hand and their left in the use of arms—this city was at the zenith of its power and glory when on this particular evening it engaged the attention of Tobit the Hebrew captive, as he sat resting from his day's toil, beneath the portal of his cottage, on the western bank of the Tigris. He felt naturally sad at first when he compared his present condition with the past in his native Thisbe, where he had enjoyed the rich inheritance of his ancestors, but whence he had brought nothing but his wife and son. Tobit's captivity dated from the invasion of the land of Israel by the late Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser, who, conquering Syria on his way,

and transplanting its inhabitants, ravaged a great part of the dominions of Pekah, and carried back with him into Assyria a great number of that King's subjects, including Tobit and all his tribe of Naphtali. By thus transplanting and breaking up the nations which they conquered, the Assyrian Kings hoped to destroy all opportunity for future national combinations and revolts, and so secure permanency to the great empire which they had during the latter reigns so vastly extended.

While Tobit remembered with regretful sorrow his confiscated share in that "field which the Lord hath blessed; and given it of the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine," his eye rested on the dear persons of his young wife Anna and their son Tobias as they laughingly romped around the little home, and his clouded countenance brightened in sympathy with the joy of their unmeditative humour. "Thank God," thought he, arising and walking in his garden, "that I have yet these the greatest of all my late possessions left. And although this home be so much more humble than the house of my fathers at Thisbe, it is spacious and grand enough for the entertainment of dear domestic loves; and here is room enough for the sweet pleasure of rest after my daily toil. Though I toil for our daily bread, and have not leisure for day-long indolence as at Thisbe, yet my work is sweetened by the love of those for whom I labour, and here I enjoy a richer zest with repose. And although these lands be not the lands of my inheritance, yet I may contemplate them as the works of the same God, even the God of Israel. And the fragrance of the gardens, the refreshment of the sweet soft air, the beauties of the landscape, the music of the groves, the glory of the evening, and the sweet breath of the rosy morning, are all mine to enjoy.

As the captive thus soliloquized, a feeling of grateful contentment at his own present lot succeeded his late grievings for the loss of his native possessions; dashed still, however, with some patriotic sorrowfulness at the misfortunes of his people, especially when he looked once more across the Tigris at the towers of the magnificent palace of Shalmanezzer, who had succeeded to the throne of Tiglath-pileser, and remembered that the King was even now absent directing to the bitter end the protracted siege of Samaria, the fenced capital of his native land, if that city had not already fallen.

While Tobit still gazed upon the grand city, ablaze with the reflections of a glorious sunset, the scene was presently dimmed, and the heavens were rapidly clouded, with more than the shades of evening. The sky grew darker and darker, and Anna and her son hastened indoors from the approaching storm; while Tobit again sheltered himself beneath his doorway, to await the grandeur of the expected scene; for he loved nature as well in her stormy as in her serene aspects. Presently the clouds were riven with vivid lightnings, rendering more intense the succeeding darkness, and loud crashing thunder rolled grandly through the black vault, followed by great plashes of rain. Brighter lightnings succeeded; deeper thunders boomed along the sky, and the torrents increased. Surpassingly grand were the glimpses of the great city revealed for trembling seconds, then lost in

utter darkness amid the deafening crash. The roar of the traffic was soon entirely hushed during the expectant intervals, like a roaring monster subdued and slain by the bolts of heaven. And, truly, Nineveh was appalled, and its mighty men experienced fear at the supposed utterances of the angry voice of Nisroch the supreme, the eagle-headed god, while the Hebrew captive still sat under his porch undismayed. The storm continued, but a mist arose from the surface of the warm earth, and the flashes no longer revealed so distinctly the landscape or the city; but the observer then perceived near at hand another object of interest approaching like a bright flickering light whenever the clouds opened. He soon discovered it to be a radiant helmet, whose wearer, an Assyrian officer, was presently standing before him. The stranger, seeing the Hebrew quietly watching the storm, expressed surprise that he should thus expose himself to the wrathful thunders of heaven, and requested that himself might obtain shelter in the cottage. The Hebrew welcomed the stranger, and replied that he feared not the thunder, but, rather, delighted in its grandeur, "For," said he, "I know that the great God who ordains the thunders is my protector, and that His angels who guard me will protect me from the fiery bolts."

"Yet," replied the Assyrian, entering the cottage, "although I fear not the front of hottest battle, I dare not brave the thunders of Nisroch."

There was that in the dignified countenance of the stranger which justified his assertion that he was fearless of human hostility. His dress was that of an officer of the King's guard; but apart from his dignity as a commander in the army of the conquering race of the Assyrians—which merely of itself would have provoked in the mind of his entertainer a feeling of aversion—he was possessed of that natural influence of superior and commanding manhood which obtained involuntary deference.

"I boast not a heart fearless as thine, my lord," said the Hebrew, "but I admire the storm without dread, knowing that the God of my people, who is gracious to me, and has blessed me, rules its terrors."

It is not so remarkable that Tobit's indifference to the terrors of the storm should have arrested the attention of his visitor, when we remember that the superstitious dread of thunder was no more a part of the nature of the Assyrians than of the still more learned and refined countrymen of Ajax, who has become immortalized, both in Poetry and Sculpture, for the temerity with which he once, two or three centuries earlier, dared to cast his eyes towards the thundering sky in attitude of defiance of its bolts.

The Assyrian was now seated, awaiting the termination of the storm, the fury of which appeared to be gradually abating, as each volley became more muffled in its roll towards the snow-capped mountains of Armenia. Anna had retired; and Tobit himself placed before the stranger some clusters of sun-dried grapes and dates, and bread of a delicious flavour, the composition of which was a secret for which Tobit and his wife had become famous among their friends. The calm disregard of the terrors of the great storm which

the Hebrew had expressed and exhibited, appeared still to occupy the thoughts of the Assyrian, and, desirous to learn more of the source and grounds of this confidence, he thus continued the conversation :

“And how can you, in this land of the invincible Gods of Assyria, confide in the favour of the God of your people to protect you, when He has failed to save you even in His own land, and has permitted you to be brought here into unhappy captivity?”

“Nay, my lord ; not unhappy altogether, although grieving for my unhappy people. It is only by the power and just anger of our God that my people are scattered and distressed. It is by His ordinance alone that Assyria rules the nations to be the instrument of His judgments. It is also by His favour and especial protection that I am here, with my dear ones, to acknowledge His power, His justice, and His mercy. He who has thus spared me and my family from the effects of His general anger, will yet save us from all real harm. And I would have you know, my lord, that this captivity of my people has been already long foretold by our seers, as a judgment of our own God, for the abandonment of His laws for the worship of strange gods which were no gods. This judgment was even distinctly threatened against us seven hundred years ago, when our fathers were first brought up out of the land of Egypt. But if the people of Israel had not thus forfeited the protection of their God, then would the great King never have prevailed against them, but have found them invincible, as in times past. The King is but the servant of our God in this matter—and our God is the God of all the earth—bringing to pass his threatened judgments against the Hebrews, and against other nations, as our seers foretold. And thereby do I know full well that the inhabitants of Samaria shall not be able to stand against the power of the great King, because their own God has forsaken them.”

The brow of the Assyrian had assumed a trace of sternness at the bold declarations of Tobit ; but the momentary feeling was soon replaced by a calmer interest in the captive's words, and he said :

“Then while your people have abandoned the worship of the God of their land, have you alone continued His faithful servant? And, if so, wherein has He specially rewarded you for your fidelity?”

“Not alone am I and my house faithful among the faithless, though I grieve to reply that they among my people are few who have preserved the pure worship of their fathers. His reward for my observance of His law, my lord, is a happy, contented, and fearless heart. Yes ; I believe that I am even happier than the King of nations ; for though poor I have enough, and contentment therewith.”

“Perhaps so,” replied the Assyrian, “so far as you can judge of happiness. But how can you appreciate the happiness of the great King, whose deeds, engraved on brass, or on tablets of unperishable burnt clay, and represented in noble sculpture, shall be recounted in remotest ages, and his name be immortal as the names of the Gods in all succeeding nations?”

“Truly, my lord, it is impossible that I should be able to speak of

the nature of that happiness belonging to great Fame such as that of great and victorious Kings, which I know I can never test by my own experience. Yet this knowledge that I can never by any possibility become famous, does not in the least mar my contentment; for I know also that when my body shall rest in the grave, and my name be entirely forgotten here, still shall my soul live by the favour of the great God in a higher and far more glorious world; and shall endure for ever in a state of glory compared to which the majesty of the great King would be obscurity, and all his greatness of no account. Then should I esteem earthly renown a vain thing had I won it, and rejoice more in a spotless heart acceptable to the Mightiest, than had I left in memory of man a renown as great as that which the great King has won among the nations. For what Prince, formerly the captain of a thousand, shall care to be remembered as the mere captain of a thousand, after he has been advanced by his King to be the general of a great army? So I judge that the souls of good Kings will care little for the renown of their earthly crowns, when they shall have been rewarded by the King of Kings with far greater glory and happiness in the Kingdoms of Immortality."

During this reply the Assyrian appeared to listen to the words and study the countenance of the Hebrew with considerable interest.

It is a curious circumstance that the humble and modest Hebrew captive, who, during this conversation with the mysterious Assyrian, expressed his very reasonable assurance that he could never by any possibility become famous, but must soon after death become utterly forgotten among men, yet is, after all, universally famous, and his history well remembered to this day—two thousand and six hundred years after the date of the conversation just stated, with a record far more ample than that of the great King himself—of Shalmanezer the conqueror of Samaria.

When Tobit had ceased speaking, the Assyrian stranger arose and looked forth at the night, and finding that the storm was over and the sky brilliant with stars, thanked his entertainer for his shelter and conversation, and passed forth to cross the Tigris by one of the ferries which were ever at hand for the use of the King's officers. And the Hebrew retired to rest that night little dreaming what great events in his history would result from that storm and his consequent entertainment of the unknown Assyrian.

CHAPTER II.

RETURN OF SHALMANEZER FROM THE CONQUEST OF SAMARIA.—THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF THE KING AND HIS VICTORIOUS ARMY INTO NINEVEH.—GREAT PROCESSION OF CAPTIVES AND SPOILS.



THE Hebrew captive in his conversation with the Assyrian officer had expressed his belief that Samaria would not be able to withstand the siege of the King of Assyria, although that strong city had already resisted the greatest offensive forces of the age during three terrible years of investment; and its stubborn inhabitants had long endured the extreme horrors of famine without sign of capitulation. The news had not yet reached Nineveh that Samaria had already fallen. But on the morrow of the great storm mentioned in the previous chapter messengers preceded the return of the Assyrian army, announcing in Nineveh the successful termination of the expedition, and the return of the victorious hosts with tens of thousands of prisoners and great spoil. The King, who delighted in surprises, had, fearless of personal danger, posted in advance of his messengers, incognito, with only one attendant, that he might pass into his palace in the disguise of an officer of the guard, and privately reveal himself to his favourite queen, and his son Sennacherib, whom he longed to behold.

On the day succeeding this announcement of the conclusion of the war there appeared on the western bank of the Tigris the vanguard of a troop of horse, who there halted for the arrival of the main army, which in due time followed with their prisoners and baggage, attended by a sound incomparable in our day—the distant thunder of ten thousand war chariots and an apparently innumerable host of foot-soldiers. For although a portion of the army remained in the conquered country to garrison the cities until they could be settled with new inhabitants, and other portions had been detached to convey the great bulk of the captive population through Babylon and Sepharvaim direct to their destined settlements in the cities of Media, and along the river Gozan, yet there returned a great host, covering with their tents the hills and valleys as far as the eye could reach. The prisoners who accompanied them consisted of the skilled artisans of various trades, with their families, who were to be employed in the imperial city; disarmed warriors; the Princes and principal priests of the conquered people; and a large concourse besides, to figure in the triumphal entry into Nineveh, and then to be dealt with according to the will of the King. Many would be doomed to recruit the armies of labourers, of which vast numbers were constantly employed under

the stern rule of overseers, in great public works, such as the transport of stones for the erection of palaces and temples, cutting water-courses, making roads, removing mounds and filling up valleys, for the convenient extension of the great city of Nineveh. While others, more favoured, would be permitted to follow their brethren eastward into the cities of the Medes, and elsewhere.

By the morning of the fourth day of our tale the whole of the army had encamped in the plain west of the river. Conspicuous was the pavilion of the King, surrounded by those of his chief Princes and officers who had accompanied the expedition, and of the royal body-guard. The King had now rejoined his army as privately as a few days since he had left it. During the night a vast stationary raft had been fixed across the river, of such stability as to form a suitable bridge for the passage into the city of the triumphal procession. Great was the preparatory bustle on both sides of the river, and all Nineveh appeared to have crowded in general holiday to the banks, the walls, the house-tops, and every place which might afford a view of the camp or of any part of the route of the royal pageant.

The first movement of especial attraction was the issuing forth of the great officers and Princes of the King's household from one of the city gates—Princes who were altogether Kings, who came forth to congratulate their sovereign and pay him homage; for, as before intimated, Shalmanezzer had not discovered himself to his court on his secret visit to the palace. While these were being received by the King, enthroned in his pavilion, the tents of the principal part of the army were rapidly and almost simultaneously struck, and in a few moments each horseman stood at the bridle of his richly-caparisoned steed; each chariot was ready for its occupant, with a captive warrior, in the costume of his country, chained to each side; the infantry formed in order of march; the standards of the various nationalities composing the host were raised fluttering in the morning breeze; trophies, spoils and prisoners were variously grouped; and the whole pageant, under the control of marshals well-instructed in the plan of the procession, was ready to move in its appointed order at a signal from the royal pavilion. Presently the body-guard, which had formed a strong circle about the King, broke in front and contracted into a crescent. The pavilion opened, revealing the King seated upon his chariot-throne, and surrounded by his Princes. Nineveh shouted; martial music struck up, and to its measure the march commenced. Companies of the various arms of infantry—the bowmen, slingers, spearmen, macemen and axe-bearers, saluted the royal tent as they passed towards the bridge, each company escorting a group of bound prisoners of war. Then passed over vast flocks of sheep; herds of cattle; waggons piled with arms; and led horses, asses, and mules, each laden with corn, wine, oil, wool, and other produce—not the great bulk, but only representative samples of the spoils of the conquered people. After these came ten troops of cavalry, each troop followed by a thousand prisoners of each of the ten conquered tribes of Israel, an Assyrian bearing in front of each thousand the captured standard, with the name of the tribe blazoned in precious stones,

agreeing with the stones on the breastplate of the Jewish high priest. After these again was a vast following of horses, asses, and mules, every one bearing a beautiful Hebrew girl in the richest costume of the Israelites. These were destined to be the future slaves of the officers of the victorious forces. The next to salute the royal pavilion were the occupants of five hundred chariots, the knights of the Assyrian army, each flanked with important prisoners of war. After these came a long procession of dishonoured priests of Baal, in rich vestments, compelled to bear the gold and silver vessels of sacrifice as trophies to be placed in the temples of the superior gods of Assyria; cars bearing altars and golden idols; the chariots and beautiful horses dedicated to the Sun; the beautiful but sorrowing Princesses of Israel, decked in their utmost magnificence by compulsion of the conquerors, and borne upon the richly-trapped royal mules and white asses. Then came the mighty siege engines which had been used against the walls and forts of Samaria. These ponderous machines moved with groaning, creaking, and deep rumbling sounds, drawn along by strong ropes, at which strained hundreds of the captives in place of beasts of burden.

All this gazing Nineveh had viewed with silent interest; but again an indescribable roar of cheers burst forth when the vacant throne of Israel appeared upon a splendid car, followed by the dejected ex-King Hoshea in a chariot, wearing the crown of Israel in mockery and heavily weighted with chains. Some have supposed that this unhappy King was captured and thrown into prison before the siege of Samaria, as soon as he was known in Assyria to have applied to the King of Egypt for assistance to throw off the yoke of Shalmanezer. This supposition has arisen from the manner of the writer of his history in the Book of Kings, where his captivity is alluded to before the brief details of the siege are given. But the statement that "the King of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison" was merely a statement in anticipation of the result of the siege afterwards mentioned; and the nine years' reign of Hoshea included the three years during which his capital was invested by the Assyrian army. The captive King's chariot was encompassed, in mock attendance, by the chief Princes of his house, on foot, and all in chains. This part of the procession caused a great stir of excitement among the vast concourse, for the protracted siege had given birth to a lively interest in the royal prisoner who had so long resisted all the power of Assyria, and was at length fallen. A great cavalcade followed, in which were borne the gold and silver, jewels, rich furniture, and other effects of the ex-King and his nobles. Every living thing belonging to the conquered people had a lean, hungry and dejected look; but there were none to pity.

The Assyrian Princes who had taken part in the war, and who had waited near the royal pavilion in their chariots, now moved into the procession. While they were falling in there arose in a large tent close by, a sound as of the loud though half-muffled roaring of many lions; and when the last chariot of the Princes began to move there came forth from the tent of the royal huntsmen a long procession of

captive lions and leopards, each half-muzzled and each led by two of the strongest men of Assyria, clothed in armour, who restrained the noble creatures by vast strength, and the terrors of stout whips. These animals were also captives from the conquered land of Israel, having been taken alive in the royal hunt during the siege; for the land of Nimrod could still boast mighty hunters among its Princes and people.

And now several eunuchs approached the King's chariot-throne of ivory and gold, and attached its trappings of silken cords to draw it forth, while one ascended at the back and raised the glorious imperial sunshade. Then advanced the bearers of the great standard, representing an Assyrian Hercules—perhaps Nimrod—stabbing a rampant lion. The band of the royal musicians, following, struck up a tempest of harmony on the harps, tabors, trumpets, cornets, flutes, pipes, sackbuts and psalteries, aided by the roar of the lions like the accompanying roll of muffled drums.

As the eunuchs drew forth the royal hero of all this pageant, the spectators across the river rent the air with loud and prolonged plaudits, which the unseen myriads beyond caught up in sympathetic excitement; and there arose from the city an incomparable sound of human voices, which caused the affrighted lions to struggle fiercely with their keepers. Amid so much splendour the King outshone all by the magnificence of his robes and royal mitre; and among so much nobility he was conspicuous for the native majesty of his countenance. The throne was followed by the vacant war-chariot of the King, containing only the royal weapons; its richly-caparisoned horses being led by the dismounted charioteer; then came the King's led-horses, noble creatures, of the most valued breeds of Arabia, with bridles of jewelled gold, and coverings of cloth of gold, embossed with devices in rich colours from the looms of Babylon and India. The body-guard flanked the throne and chariot, and the Princes and officers from Nineveh followed on foot. Then with wonderful celerity the pavilion was taken to pieces, folded, and borne forward in the procession with the regal furniture.

The interest of the spectators having now reached its climax, little heed was paid to the general hosts which followed in wearying thousands, composing the great forces of the army with its captives and spoils. Among the latter were several large caravans of Tyrian merchandise, which had been captured in the great commercial highways of Arabia and Palestine. For the King had been warring against the Phœnicians, as well as the Israelites, although with very indecisive results as regarded the former.

Within the gate of the city a wide space had been kept clear of the populace all along the route of the royal progress, and as soon as the King reached the gate, the most beautiful women of Nineveh, including many of its Princesses, came forth with melodious music and dances, chanting victory songs in honour of the triumphant King. And thus was the great King attended to the gates of his palace.

Great were the rejoicings in Nineveh all that day, and after the sun was set the vast city became brilliant with illuminations. The sound

of music and rejoicings never ceased during the night, for although some families had to mourn the loss of sons, brothers, or fathers, during the long campaign, many more tens of thousands celebrated the return of the long absent, exalted with the honours of conquest, and enriched with spoils.

On the morrow the King's criers proclaimed a seven days' feast throughout the city, in aid of which one-fourth of the food spoils of the war, such as sheep, oxen, corn, wine and oil, was divided among the needy to enable them to keep the feast, while the remaining three fourths were divided among the army of the expedition, which after having received its pay was disbanded. On the same day the command was given that a portion of the captives who had families, and were neither soldiers, nor craftsmen, nor chiefs of the people, should be marched back to the western bank of the Tigris, and there encamp under a guard of the garrison, until at the conclusion of the festivities they should be marched into the cities of Media.

CHAPTER III.

RAGUEL, EDNA, AND SARA AMONG THE CAPTIVES.—DAYS OF HAPPINESS.—THE MESOPOTAMIAN SPRING.—THE FORESHADOWING OF SORROW.—THE STORY OF THE TRUE LOVE OF MESHAD, PRINCE OF MOAB.



URING the day of the Royal entry into Nineveh, Tobit had shut himself up in his house in great affliction. The music and the plaudits, which all day long reached his ears, kept his mind in such an agony as might be felt by one who was compelled to hear the sounds of bustle attending the execution of a dear friend. His philosophy of contentment was now decidedly found deficient. For whatever advantages, even if much more real than existed, might have been counted in his individual circumstances, all selfishness was absorbed in overwhelming sorrow at the degradation and sufferings of his people. But in the heart of his son Tobias there was no place for sorrow to plant itself for any long period, even on such a day; and whenever a louder strain of music was borne on the breeze, or a fresh shout rolled across the river, he would run forth into the garden to view snatches of the grand procession crossing the bridge, with childish enjoyment of the novelty. And Anna, although sympathizing with her husband's grief, was actuated as much by curiosity to see what was going forward, as by anxiety to fetch in her boy, when she frequently ran out with speed, and tardily returned with her truant, taking the opportunity to prolong her gaze on the advancing and every varying procession. On one occasion, returning with the lad, she interrupted her chidings of his disobedience to say:

"I do believe, dear husband, that in glancing towards the bridge just now I have seen our cousin Raguel crossing among the captives, leading a mule with cousin Edna and a child mounted thereon."

Tobit only replied with a groan at this reminder that probably many of his personal friends and relatives, who had escaped the first captivity, might now be there indeed, with a gloomy uncertain fate before them. For he knew that sometimes the despotic anger of the Assyrian monarchs selected prisoners for cruel tortures; and that, after so obstinate a resistance, perpetual laborious slavery might prove the mildest of their sentences. King Shalmanezzer had been so much absent from his capital, engaged in wars to recover the revolted provinces of his empire, that he had not yet found leisure during his military reign to win the titles of Merciful and Generous.

All that day, and the succeeding night, were spent by Tobit in sorrowful seclusion, but on the morrow he went out, and listened eagerly for news of the fate of the captives. Among other rumours he heard that the Hebrew King was condemned to death ; his advisers to be flayed alive, and otherwise tortured ; and all the captive people to be held in perpetual slavery. But later in the day came the tidings that Hoshea was to be immured for life in the State prison, in chains ; his councillors and nobles to be degraded to State slaves ; the skilled artisans to be retained in Nineveh, with freedom there to exercise their various crafts ; the soldiers to be absorbed in the general army ; and the great bulk of the captives, consisting of the pastoral, agricultural, and mercantile classes, to be conveyed into Media and settled there. It was announced at the same time that for the present the latter would return across the river, and re-encamp on the western bank. This was news of gladness compared to the fears which Tobit had before entertained, and he waited to watch the return of the captives with the hope that he might discover his cousin Raguel, whom his wife had given him reason to believe was among them. Filled with this expectation he scrutinized the dejected groups as they marched over the bridge, under the guard of a few soldiers, and at length discovered the object of his search in the well-remembered persons of Raguel and Edna his wife, accompanied by a beautiful daughter, who was not born when her parents took leave of Tobit in their native Thisbe twelve years previously, to settle in Samaria.

Following the captives to their encampment, Tobit obtained permission of the guard to visit his friends, and the meeting, though tearful, was not joyless. Tobit further succeeded in obtaining permission from the officer of the guard that during the encampment his cousins should lodge at his house, which stood close by, merely presenting themselves in the camp each day at muster call ; this arrangement leaving the daily allowance of the captive family at the disposal of the officer. Thus the cousins were enabled to spend a few comparatively happy days together, but it was, of course, happiness alloyed with grief—grief intensified again and again by recitals of the incidents of the dreadful siege. But there were two young hearts which made most of the joy of the occasion, and abandoned its sorrows to their parents. And as our history has principally to do with the future of these children, we also shall abandon the terrible details of the siege and fall of Samaria, to watch the origin of their eventful loves. They rambled together in the woods and the flowery fields all joyous, Tobias in his rich dark beauty of hopeful boyhood, and Sara in her radiance of sweet confiding girlhood, with golden hair, and fair form of budding womanhood—and, to use the language of those parts—upright as a spear and active as a young doe. The whole land, where untrampled, was now a garden of spring flowers of richness and luxuriance peculiar to that month and clime. The brilliant tulip was abundant, and the tall hyacinth waved its scented blossoms in such regular profusion that whole valleys appeared to be covered as with an ærial drapery of delicate blue, hovering mistily above the green herbage. To-morrow new flowers would open and

new tints prevail. So the imaginations of these children produced each day new flowery joys of life. The cooing of the turtle dove was daylong, succeeded at evening by the plaintive love-song of the nightingale. As each day grew warmer, so their young loves warmed and the charm grew more intense. It was fresh, gushing, joyous Spring within and without. Brief storms would intervene, when the flowers would close and droop, but the sunshine soon prevailed and restored the smiling beauty of the scene. So in future will the storms of life sweep over the fair prospects of the loves of these children; but a controlling Benificence will restore peace and, at last, realize the joys of their life-dream. After the fitful storms of spring they will enjoy a summer life of serene happiness. And not even the winter of age shall destroy the flowers which are now budding in their hearts; for they shall prove Amaranths of immortal blossom, being nourished in hearts of virtue and truth. For the love which has taken root in the hearts of these beautiful children is not a mere sensual attachment, but the strong pure love of the soul; and what is more reasonable than that with the immortality of the soul shall survive the most powerful and most delightful affinities and sensations of its existence?

While we thus speak of them as children, however, the girl being less than twelve and the boy less than fourteen years of age, let us not suppose them such children as those ages indicate among ourselves in Northern Europe. We must remember that in the clime of which we write humanity ripens with rapidity and matures early, like the suddenly ripening produce of the soil. Sara and Tobias combined the heart-simplicity of children with the dawn of physical maturity.

While thus the days were passing they had forgotten that they must soon part; until the arrival of the sixth day, when with sadness and pain they looked forward to the morrow which must terminate these joyous holidays. They were sitting together in Tobit's garden, silent and thoughtful, when, at length, the boy tenderly took the hand of his fair cousin, and said, "I wish we were going with you to-morrow, dear Sara; I shall never be happy again without you; I shall never know where you will be settled, nor where to seek you should it ever be permitted me to seek you. O now I feel how sorrowful is this captivity!" Sara looked into his face as he spoke, saw the tears gathering, and blushingly smiled, as with pleasure, at his declaration.

"Do you really so love me, dear cousin?" she asked, "then I am glad, and shall be happy, and will always hope that you will find me some day. But will you really try to find me to claim me as your own?"

"My cousin," said Tobias, "Indeed I will; and by our law you cannot be refused to me, as I am your nearest kinsman."

"Then, knowing I am yours, I shall be happy; and will still be yours until you find me; and even if you fail to find me."

Tobias drew the willing girl to his bosom, and kissed her, and said he claimed her then, and that she was already his, although they must part to-morrow.

"Yes," said she, "I will be yours faithfully, like the fair Princess of Zobah, and shall always feel sure that you will find me, as the Prince of Moab found her at last. Did you ever hear of them?"

"No," replied Tobias, "but I should very much like to hear of them, if you, dear cousin, will be the story-teller."

"Then I will tell you the tale."

She then seated herself against a soft flowery embankment, and Tobias, reclining by her side, listened while she told the following :

"THE STORY OF THE TRUE LOVE OF MESHAD,
PRINCE OF MOAB.

"In the days of our King Solomon there lived a most beautiful Princess named Adora, the daughter of the King of Zobah. Many Princes fell in love with her, and wanted to marry her, but she shewed an aversion to them all; and her father, who loved her very much, would not force her to marry against her will, but was even rather glad to have that excuse to keep her at home. Even King Solomon offered to take her as his wife, merely on the report of her great beauty, but when she received the message she flew into a great passion at the proposal, for he had so many wives already, that he could not even have kissed them all round and asked after their health once a week, and have attended to the business of his kingdom as well. And she knew they must one after another have been taken in by supposing they would be special favourites. But the King her father dared not send back word how angrily she had received the offer. He returned an answer in his polite way, saying how deeply he regretted being withheld from the very great honour proposed to him, through the general aversion which his daughter had to marrying anyone at all. So the Princess continued single till she was nearly twenty years old, when one day, as she was looking out of the palace window, she saw, passing by, a young stranger, with whose appearance she was rather struck; for, besides being very handsome indeed, he had a pleasing modest look mixed up with his manliness. She did not think much about him at first; yet when she saw him again two or three times, she looked at nobody else while he was in sight.

"In a day or two, when he was again passing before the palace, his eye happened to catch hers as she watched him, and he appeared to be so confused with admiration that she blushed and he blushed, and then she withdrew out of sight. Now this young man happened to be Prince Meshad, the son of the King of Moab, who was travelling about in pursuit of knowledge, and had no idea of falling in love. Yet he did fall in love most desperately. This feeling brought him several times to the same spot, or thereabout; and he always managed to look up at the window as he passed. He never again saw the beautiful face looking out, but sometimes discerned the outlines of a lady's figure standing further in the apartment in the shade, and, possibly, watching him. This made him hope he was watched for and observed by her, and proved to him also that she was not one of the bold ones. Still he had no idea who the lady might be, as there were, of course, so many ladies living and attending at the

palace. The Princess, seeing that he passed so often, and each time looked up anxiously at the same window, could also guess that she had at least made some impression upon his fancy; but when she observed that he looked paler and paler every day, she felt sure that he really loved her, and was by no means indifferent to the discovery. Besides this, she had the advantage over Prince Meshad in being able to find out who he was. This she did by pointing him out to her women from the interior of the apartment, where she and her ladies, themselves in the shade, were indiscernible from without.

"After this the neighbourhood of the palace had a charm of attraction for the young Prince; and when he could not for shame be looking up at the window, he would frequently go into the public audience chamber, where the King of Zobah listened to petitions, and gave judgment, during a certain part of nearly every day. The Princess Adora, learning this, made it her plan to endeavour to discover herself to Prince Meshad there, and trust to what might follow. So she made use of her privilege to sit by the King her father sometimes, as though to seek amusement in the cases brought to his throne for judgment. And there the Prince one day recognised the lady of blushes, and joyfully discovered who she was.

"I need not say, dear cousin, how astonished the King of Zobah was, when the Prince of Moab's suit for the hand of the Princess met with no refusal on her part. So far from objecting to him as she had hitherto objected to all her lovers, she begged her father to give her to the Prince of Moab; and the affectionate father yielded on condition that they should spend half their time at the Court of Zobah. Well, they were married, and great rejoicings there were on that day. In the evening the attendants of the Princess waited upon her in the nuptial chamber till they were all dismissed. But when the Prince came there, Adora was not to be found. After awhile the Prince and the King became alarmed, and search was made throughout the palace, but no Princess could they discover. You must imagine the state of mind of both the father and the bridegroom now. The whole city was searched for days after, with no better success, and no one could tell what to make of it. The Prince nearly lost his senses about it, and the King of Zobah could attend to nothing but sending messengers all over the country, listening to hopeless answers, and offering great rewards for any clue to the mysterious whereabouts of his missing daughter. At last, in consequence of a dream, the distressed Prince of Moab determined to make personal application to King Solomon for the assistance of his great wisdom and knowledge, which were supposed to extend beyond the wisdom and knowledge of all other men, for he had secret means of diving into matters beyond general human understanding, and, it was said, had even the genii under his control.

"So Prince Meshad hastened, with what strength he had left, toward Jerusalem, calling upon the way at Moab, his father's kingdom, which was tributary to King Solomon; and, taking with him from thence an extra present of twenty thousand lambs, he sent the offer of his gift to the great King, and begged for a special audience.

King Solomon received him graciously, and listened to his strange story; and after he had made use of certain incantations and discovered all further that he wanted to know about the matter, he asked Prince Meshad if he felt sure that he so loved his lost Princess that he could pass through great dangers, and resist great temptations to recover her. The Prince declared he must die if he could not find her; that he was sure his fidelity to his bride would be proof against all temptations to delay his search for her; and that as to dangers, as he must die of grief without her, he would willingly face death in resisting any dangers, however great, that lay between them.

“‘Then,’ said King Solomon, ‘I will furnish you with a guide who will lead you to where she is hidden, a long journey hence. If you love her as you say, and can resist all temptations to delay or to desert the completion of the journey, you will recover her; but if you prove untrue under the temptations of the way, she will never be restored to you.’

“The King then uttered some mysterious words, and there suddenly appeared before him an old man, whom the King simply told to lead the Prince of Moab to the Princess of Zobah, by journeys on foot, and through the five temptations; and to be faithful and just in his errand, remembering the terrible punishment of the disobedient. The old man made a sign of submission to the King and at once started with Prince Meshad on the journey.

“Now it was said that King Solomon could have restored the Princess to her husband at once if he had chosen, without the performance of the long journey on foot, and the resistance of the five temptations; although she was at that moment a very long way off; so great was his power over invisible agents, and so great his knowledge to discover hidden mysteries. But it was supposed that the King felt a little grudge that the Princess Adora should after all have married, when she had refused his own offer with the plea that she would marry no man. For although he could not even remember the names of the many wives that he had, he could very well remember this one that he had not succeeded in obtaining, because she was the only one who had ever refused him. And, indeed, he must have had all the other Princesses of the East, who had not got married before he had time to ask for them; for he had seven hundred, besides three hundred wives who were not born Princesses. But as to his supposed power to restore the Princess of Zobah at once, we shall see, later on, that in this instance a still greater power controlled that of King Solomon.

“And, really, although our King Solomon was a very splendid King, he must have been very naughty, and disloyal to the ladies. For when he woo’d the lovely Princess of Egypt, the daughter of Pharaoh, he promised her eternal love and no rivals. And he pretended to like her very much, for he built her a most beautiful palace all to herself, and surrounded it with a paradise; and she had twelve Princesses, the daughters of Kings, to wait upon her. He got her the most beautiful horses in all Arabia, creatures that could almost speak—besides those from Egypt which her father Pharaoh had given her—

and had them bridled and harnessed in splendid jewelled trappings. He had a lovely chariot built for her in ivory, inlaid and paved with pure gold. And she had the most beautiful dresses and jewels in all the world; for all the most beautiful things were being constantly brought to her by ships and caravans, from which to choose what she liked. And Solomon wrote her most charming love-songs, for he could make beautiful poems. And although she was very young and the loveliest of queens, and deserved it all, he continued to make love to other women, until he had a thousand wives. Dear Tobias, to think and speak of it makes me hot and thirsty."

The lad was in a sort of trance while listening to her rapid story, and for a moment could not remember where he was. But raising his head from his cousin's lap, he looked into her flushed face, kissed her, and ran for a cup of water, and had soon again resumed his delightful position, impatiently listening for this continuation of the tale:

"But Prince Meshad was a true Prince, and a true lover, as you must be, dear Tobias; and he felt sure and determined that no temptation should hinder him from recovering his lost Princess, if her recovery only depended upon that. When he had, a few days previously, despaired of ever seeing her again, he had determined to continue loyal to her memory; and he felt sure he could now be true to her in the very path which was to lead direct to her, whatever temptations should beset him, and, in spite of the incredulity of the wise King Solomon, who could not have done it himself with all his power and wisdom.

"Well, they journeyed on in silence; the guide with a staff, and the Prince with a splendid sharp sword of Damascus steel, the hilt and scabbard crusted all over with jewels. The only other weapon which he carried was a sling, worn as a girdle round his waist, for hurling stones in distant attack. And in this art of slinging the Prince was most expert. He had admired in his boyhood how David had become the founder of a powerful and exceedingly famous dynasty through his skill, in the first instance, in reaching with a stone from his sling, the head of the giant Goliath. The Prince, therefore, having attained to great expertness in this art, always carried about his waist, a sling as a girdle, more effective in his hands than a bow and quiver of arrows.

"The guide never spoke that day, not even to answer questions; and as Prince Meshad preferred thinking to talking, he seemed rather pleased than not that he had been provided with a deaf and dumb companion, for so he concluded his guide to be. And the old man never appeared to grow weary; which rather surprised Meshad, seeing that he had not the excitement of a love-journey to urge him on, and had the burden of many years to carry. Indeed towards night the Prince himself was beginning to grow very weary, and was thinking he would soon be compelled to stop and rest, when his guide led the way to an opening in the rock, the interior of which presented utter darkness. The heart of the Prince fluttered in his bosom when he thought for a moment that perhaps he should find his Adora concealed

there. But he remembered that it was improbable ; since he was to encounter temptations and complete a long journey before he should meet her. Then he wondered if he could trust his guide in such a place ; and, for an instant, in case of treachery, laid his hand upon his jewelled sword-hilt ; but he dismissed that fear as quickly as his previous hope, when he remembered that the guide was so solemnly commissioned by the great King Solomon, who could not be suspected, either of mischoice or of treason. All this passed through his mind as rapidly as he could walk a dozen steps ; and that brought them to a chamber in the rock, where they met a very venerable-looking old man advancing to meet them with a lamp in his hand. He appeared at once to recognise the guide, and they spoke a few sentences in a language unknown to the younger traveller, which appeared to introduce the Prince to the old man with the lamp ; for, bowing to him, the old man led both his guests into another chamber, where he silently placed before them dried fruits and wine, of which they as silently partook. The effects of the wine appeared to be to make the guide sleepy, and he soon retired to a couch of moss : while its effect upon the Prince was quite the contrary ; for he was so refreshed that he felt no trace of his late fatigue. When the guide had fallen asleep the old host expressed the delight it gave him that his friend had brought the Prince there to be his guest for the night, and regretted that his daughter was not at that time present to attend him and do him suitable honour. The Prince of Moab gracefully acknowledged his host's hospitality and politeness, and, in the course of the conversation which followed, was surprised to learn that the venerable inhabitant of the caves was the son of a King, the brother of a King, and the father of the heiress to a great kingdom. In short, it turned out that he had been the legitimate heir to the throne of Egypt ; but having in his youth indulged a great passion for learning, had early relinquished his right to the kingdom in favour of a younger brother, that he might pursue with undivided assiduity his search after knowledge and wisdom. He related that Solomon himself had been his pupil, and that his books contained more revelations of hidden mysteries, incantations, and wisdom, than Solomon had ever been able to master, because the duties of empire had abridged his leisure for study.

“Now the Prince of Moab was of a very studious disposition, and had shewn from his childhood, not only an uncommon eagerness after knowledge, but a great aptness in its acquisition. He was, therefore, greatly delighted with the conversation of this sage, and listened to his words with the reverence due to an oracle. In fact, you will remember, dear cousin, I said, when he first saw the Princess of Zobah at the palace window, that he was travelling in pursuit of knowledge, and not of beauty.

“The sage shewed that he was acquainted with the habits of the young Prince, and gave him words of praise and encouragement, which could but impress the mind of one so ambitious of learning with the most lively self-satisfaction, as well as good feeling towards his commender. After some time spent in such agreeable conversation

the sage took up the lamp, and led the Prince through some passages of his rocky habitation into a vast library, stored with countless books, which contained all the wisdom of Egypt and of the East Country, and much more; all accessible only to the royal old man who exhibited these treasures to the astonished Prince. The sage presently opened one of the volumes and said :

“ ‘Now here we have the formula of an enchantment which enables us to enjoy the melodies of the heavenly bodies, which have been referred to by great sages as the music of the stars singing together. This music had, however, never been fully revealed to human ears until the great philosopher who compiled this volume discovered the enchantment which should enable us by its use at any time to hear snatches of the everlasting harmony. You must know that the stars move about in such beautiful order, forming by their courses devices so wondrous that they produce a delightful harmony throughout the infinite heavens. But the space in which they move is so vast that the harmonious device of their movements can only be grasped by the sight of God and the angels. It is not really a sound, or combination of sounds, but an effect of harmony that is as ravishing to the senses of the angels as the music of their own choirs. But as no human mind could enjoy this harmony through the eye, this philosopher sought and discovered the enchantment which should give it interpretation through the ear in the manner of melodious music.’

“The sage then read some mystic words from the book, performing certain signs according to its directions. He then touched with his finger the forehead and ears of the Prince of Moab, and there arose slowly and sweetly swelling, as though he were approaching it, the most ravishing music of the stars singing together in their courses. It was as much as the Prince could bear without being lulled into insensibility by intensity of enjoyment. After awhile the sage touched the ears of the Prince again, and the music died away as though the hearer were swiftly receding from it.

“The sage then took up another book and informed the Prince that it contained the results of the studies of the whole lives of twelve succeeding magicians, extending over six hundred years; the last of whom completed the process necessary for revealing to the vision of the enquirer any one real scene of life as it existed at the moment of the experiment, in any part of the world. He then proceeded to give Prince Meshad an illustration of its power, premising that he would reveal the present situation of his daughter the Egyptian Princess, then in Egypt. Then the end of the library appeared to be filled with a mist which rapidly arranged itself into a gorgeous scene, full of colour and life, and apparent solidity. The Princess appeared to be in her chamber, attended by a number of lovely ladies, preparing to retire to rest. One of them assisted at her disrobement; another presented a golden cup of soothing cordial; a third held a night-robe of fine linen, embroidered with most beautiful lace; a fourth liberated from its golden fastenings masses of rich dark hair, which fell over her magnificent shoulders and bosom of exquisite fairness;

another kneeling at her beautiful feet, bathed them in a salver of chased silver. And the subject of all these services was altogether a queenly beauty.

“‘Farewell, lovely child,’ said the sage, as he caused the scene to dissolve. ‘Pride of Egypt! Goddess of beauty and wisdom combined!’”

Here the daughter of Raguel paused in her story to exclaim, “Now is it not very alarming, cousin Tobias, to think that through such books as this, one is never really safe from being seen! Fancy being thus exhibited without one’s knowledge, at the will of a philosophic showman, through the inquisitiveness of those twelve magicians! I hope nobody will ever be looking after me in that manner without first giving me notice, that I may be prepared. And yet, perhaps, we need not mind so much, after all, but take care so to act, always, as though some one were looking on, especially when we know very well that, without the aid of this invention of the twelve magicians, the eye of God is always upon us.”

“I was just thinking,” said Tobias, “what a splendid invention it was, and wishing I could manage to get at it, to discover you by, when you are gone from us, and see sometimes what you are doing.”

This speech brought down upon him a playful rap on the cheek; and the strict injunction from his little mistress, that he should never, on any account, attempt the experiment, for Prince Meshad had never required to use it. “Although,” continued she, “it at once occurred to him that here was an instant means of getting a glance at the circumstances and situation of his dear Adora; and it was on his tongue to ask this favour, if the sage had given him an opportunity to put in a word without rudeness. But the philosopher, without a pause, continued, leading the way out of the library as he spoke, ‘In twenty days she will be here from the Court of Egypt, to spend with me a month in study; for she divides her time equally between her future queendom and the acquisition of learning under my guidance.’”

“The royal sage then led the Prince of Moab to a sleeping chamber hewn in the rock, and invited him to repose himself; first handing him a mystically-engraved nautilus shell, full of a delicious cordial which should induce sweet sleep, unhindered by disquieting thought or wakeful imagination. Such a sleep, therefore, had Prince Meshad that night in the rock-hewn home of the Egyptian sage.”

CHAPTER IV.

A DISQUISITION ON SPIRITS, AND EVENTS TERMED SUPERNATURAL.—
 THE CONTINUATION OF SARA'S STORY: THE GENIE OF THE FIERY
 GEM: A VISIT TO A CONCEALED TREASURY OF A KING OF THE
 TITANS, WHO REIGNED BEFORE THE FLOOD.—COMBAT BETWEEN
 THE PRINCE OF MOAB AND A TERRIBLE MONSTER OF THE WOODS.
 —A FAIRY TEMPTRESS AND A MAGIC CASTLE.



THE course of Sara's story, which we are about to resume, leads to the recital of events of a kind so supernatural that they will perhaps be regarded by the incredulous of the present age as the mere baseless creations of imagination. But as many of the most startling events of this book, being corroborated in the sacred writings of the Hebrews, are of that character, we feel bound to reproduce them. Because we do not in these days witness such operations, many discredit their occurrence in the past. To them we can only say with the historian Josephus, "as to these matters, let every one look upon them as he thinks fit." But might we not as reasonably doubt the pre-historic existence of the Iguanodon, Megalosaurus, Labyrinthodon, and Plesiosaurus, because they do not now cumber the earth with their huge and hideous bodies? No; because although we have no contemporary history of the existence of these monsters, we have indubitable physical evidences of their having inhabited the earth, in their fossil remains. But we cannot reasonably be expected to produce the fossil remains of spirits and genii for the verification of the probabilities of our narrative; nor do we consider the weight of our evidence of the previous operations of spirits upon the earth as deficient, because it consists only of the abundant and various records of contemporaneous history. To doubt this evidence is to doubt the veracity of most of the ancient records and traditions, including the Old and the New Testaments. Not only has every people preserved traditional accounts of spirits under the names of angels, genii, fairies, demons, gnomes and sylphs, as well as of enchantments and exorcisms, but our holy religion cannot be separated from a faith in past spiritual appearances and agencies both of good and of evil character. In the Old Testament it is recorded that sons of God, or angels, loved the daughters of men, before the Flood. Moses and the magicians performed marvellous enchantments before Pharaoh. Angels are frequently mentioned as traversing the earth and revealing themselves to its inhabitants. By an incantation the spirit of Samuel was made to appear before Saul. Wizards and witches are frequently mentioned,

not as impostors, but as exercising forbidden and mischievous arts. During these periods spiritual manifestations appear to have been universal; for not only used the Kings of Israel and Judah to "enquire of the Lord" and receive replies, but every nation had its oracle, though some of them are described as "lying spirits." Still later we find spirits traversing the earth and revealing themselves when Jesus cast out devils; and in the time of Paul, when spirits refused to obey a false exorcism and attacked the imposters to their physical hurt. And it is a mistake to suppose for a moment that this state of things is mere matter of doubtful history; for even to this day are human beings the habitations of devils; and so numerous are the instances, that fortunate indeed is the man or woman whose acquaintances do not include some unhappy person who is positively and undoubtedly possessed of a devil; yea, and so possessed that only by divine miracle, such as the command of Jesus, can the evil spirit be cast out; all incantations for their ejection being now lost to literature. Josephus mentions that Solomon had great power over demons, and left behind him incantations which were successfully used so late as in the days of that historian, of which himself had been an eye-witness. Perhaps these were similar to those contained in the books of "curious arts" which were burned under the influence of Paul's preaching. We also know that the Arabs preserved traditions of the great power of Solomon, the son of David, over genii or demons; and especially by means of a most powerful incantation, said to consist of certain mysterious names of the Deity, which were engraved upon the royal seal. Still, while we shall faithfully record the events of our tale as they are said to have happened, we say again, with Josephus, "let every one look upon them as he thinks fit." If we are asked what has become of all these angels, genii, fairies, demons, gnomes and sylphs, that we see nothing of them in our days, we can only reply that we have no idea what has become of them. Perhaps they have all emigrated to some newer world; or, more likely still, have been since subjected to the conditions and laws of human life, and appear among us now only in human forms and characters. For who during his lifetime has not met with at least one angel in human form? As to devils, we have already said that we recognise them also in all sorts of human guises; some openly glorying in their devilish practices, and others, more mischievous still, disguising themselves as saints. Fairies in beautiful human forms are very abundant in these days. And as to genii, through the medium of human brains, and scientific and mechanical contrivances, they are transforming the surface of the whole earth, and accomplishing things more wonderful, and far more beneficial to the world, than when they roamed about it as giant spirits. In the course of this work, however, we shall have to account for the final disappearance of certainly one of these spiritual genii.

Sara, continuing her story, said, "The next morning at breakfast the royal Egyptian sage informed the young Prince of Moab that he had conceived so great an affection for him that he was willing to make him wiser than Solomon if he chose to remain with him; and

that he should have the use of all his books and the assistance of the Princess of Egypt in his studies. 'And she,' said the sage, 'is already as successful a rival of the King of Israel in wisdom, as she is of her cousin, his Egyptian wife, in beauty.'

"Now, dear Tobias, you must not suppose for a moment that Prince Meshad was influenced by what he had seen or heard of the beauty of the sage's daughter, for he was too true and loyal a Prince for that: but he was very much tempted to embrace this rare opportunity of gathering such wonderful knowledge. In just two or three days he thought he might obtain the knowledge of some powerful arts secreted in those priceless volumes; and it appeared to him that such acquisitions must enhance him in the esteem of the Princess of Zobah, when she was at length restored to him. So he would desire his guide to wait merely three days, while he prosecuted his studies with the royal sage. But in the midst of his pause, before he had time to express his decision, the guide arose and took his staff to depart. Then said Prince Meshad, 'Pray, royal Sir, bid the guide stay for me three days.' But the sage, shaking his head, said it would be useless bidding him stay when he was on King Solomon's duty; but that the Prince was his own master, and could stay as long as he pleased, and resume his journey at will, under other guidance. Then the Prince remembered the declaration of King Solomon, that unless he could resist all temptations to delay or desert the completion of the journey, he must lose his Princess for ever. Now he did not stop to weigh the question, and say, 'Well, if I lose one Princess I may gain, instead, another of great beauty, and greater fortune than Adora; and also, in addition, the fulfilment of the great ambition of my previous life.' No; he merely exclaimed, 'O, Adora, Adora!' and his heart was so full of warm love that nothing could tempt him to stop; and acknowledging with princely grace the preferences intended him by the royal sage, he hastened after the guide, and continued the journey. Thus did the Prince of Moab accomplish one day's journey on foot after his Princess, and resist for her sake the temptations of Philosophy.

"They travelled, as on the day before, in perfect silence; for the guide still was, or pretended to be, deaf to the few questions which were put to him by the Prince; and for ought the Prince had yet discovered he could only speak some foreign tongue, and not understanding any questions of Meshad, chose to avoid the dumb show of signs. Again the Prince was surprised at the vigour of the old man, which shewed no signs of exhaustion toward the close of the day, when they were making straight for a high mountain. The Prince was about to stop and seek some spot for repose, being entirely overcome with fatigue, and assured of his utter inability to ascend the mountain. But, instead of attempting the ascent, the guide went straight to a tree laden with a most beautiful-looking fruit, and gathered some. The Prince followed his example, and gathered what he thought would suffice for a supper. The guide then led the way into a small cleft of the mountain, instead of over it, a cleft with which he seemed to be well acquainted, but which his follower thought

would be very difficult of discovery to a stranger. When they were within they found it dimly, but sufficiently, lighted by glow-worms, which feebly sparkled on all sides like miniature stars. Here they sat down and made a good supper of the beautiful-looking fruit, which proved as pleasant to the taste as it was lovely to the eye. When the guide had finished his repast of fruit he retired to a corner of the chamber, and arranged himself for sleep. But again the Prince of Moab found himself so refreshed that he had no disposition to sleep. He sat thinking of his adventures, when, suddenly, the apartment was illumined by the entrance of a most brilliant fire-fly, which rendered almost invisible the pale light of the glow-worms. This brightness revealed that, what the Prince had supposed to be a chamber, was but part of a long passage, which the fire-fly penetrated with a trail of light. The Prince was amazed, and his curiosity excited; and feeling that he had by his side the good sword with the jewelled hilt and scabbard, he arose and followed the fire-fly; for although it seemed to be no longer visible there appeared at the extreme end of the passage a bright star which lighted the way. When the Prince drew near to the star it moved forward towards him, and he perceived, to his surprise, that it was no other than the inherent light of a glorious gem which was worn in the head-gear of a beautiful youth. This youth is said to have been as handsome as that Apollo of the Grecians, of whom the merchants of Tyre bring us so many tales. The two youths saluted each other with a graceful inclination of the body, and he of the radiant jewel said, 'I came on the wings of the fire-fly to do you service, by command of the royal Sage of the Caves, who wishes to prove his great love for you. He has knowledge of the secret word which compels my attendance, and I am bound to obey him. Finding thee in this spot my service shall be to reveal to thee the hidden treasures of this mountain, which are concealed even from my master the royal sage, and could be discovered to him only by myself.'

"The wearer of the glorious gem then turned round and shed a light forward. A few steps led them to an elbow of the passage, turning which they forced away a great stone and found themselves in a vast space, which the glorious gem was insufficient to light up, revealing, instead, only encompassing darkness.

" 'This,' said the youth of the Jewel, 'was the chief treasury of the last Titan King of the world before the Flood. Its dome was then illuminated by a myriad such gems as this which I now wear, filled with the celestial light which Prometheus stole from heaven. But their light faded at the great Deluge, and darkness has reigned here from that day. Beneath it are accumulated the greater part of the riches of the old world, the first gatherings of the earth's treasures of gold, and silver, and precious stones, from Adam to Noah. I will now touch the extinguished lamps with my gem, and re-kindle in them a light which shall last for seven days.' The genie of the Jewel then resumed the form of the fire-fly; and, ascending, re-kindled in the vast dome of the hollow mountain-palace a myriad brilliant lights, revealing to the Prince of Moab such a scene as had never before

entered his imagination. The three circles of unbroken light above, shed, as from a triple halo, a brightness which was reflected from heaps of countless rubies, diamonds, emeralds, amethysts, topazes, sapphires, and other jewels. And as to gold, walls were built with massy nuggets of it, and pyramids of it rose high into the dome in many places. In the same metal were many beautiful vases and domestic vessels, formed by some of the ingenious pupils of Tubal-cain, and all filled with precious stones of various sizes, some of which were of enormous weight and surprising beauty. There were also many other things in bronze from the foundries of Tubal-cain, and vast stores of silver, blackened with age, and unwrought brass, covered with a green rust. When the Prince had sufficiently observed these things the wearer of the living gem said :

“ ‘When Noah foretold the Deluge, men did not believe him ; but while the ark was building many thought that possibly there might be some foundation for his prophecy, and that there might happen such a deluge as would overflow the low lands and endanger their property ; but from which they might escape to the mountains with their lives. Consequently much treasure, in addition to the King’s stores, was brought here for security ; as the King had made it known that he would provide against possible danger by completely sealing up the entrance to the treasury until the time had passed for the fulfilment of Noah’s prediction. The entrance was therefore so built up with rocks by the mighty Titans of those days, and sealed with strong cement, that the hugeness of the rude fragments alone has prevented their removal by the descendants of Noah, and allowed no surmise that they covered the entrance to an antedeluvian treasury. The passage through which we have passed has been since opened by an earthquake. I now give you access to this treasure during seven days, to carry hence as many camel-loads as you may choose ; until, at the expiration of that term, the lights will be again extinguished, and the stone replaced at the entrance.’ ”

“ The speaker then disappeared in the form of the fire-fly, leaving the Prince amazed at his adventure, and at his good fortune in having gained the good-will of that mighty Sage of the Caves, by whose means so vast a treasure was placed at his disposal. He then calculated that during seven days he would be able to carry hence more riches than even King Solomon possessed, and might safely become the most generous and most magnificent Prince in the world. His imagination became so excited while he viewed these rare and countless treasures, that he presently walked forth to cool his heated brain in the night air, taking care to note the cleft in the mountain where his guide slept. While he paced up and down in the clear moonlight he became very thirsty, and, looking about him, perceived a tree laden with a fruit of a luscious and inviting appearance, but not the same from which he had gathered earlier in the evening. Plucking some of this fruit he found it pleasant and used it freely. Not only was his thirst quenched thereby, but the fever of his brain was allayed, and, yielding to an agreeable weariness, he lay down beneath the tree, and slept soundly and sweetly until morning.

“Imagine the astonishment of the Prince when, awaking in the morning, he perceived that the plain was covered with a thousand dromedaries, each one attended by two young men, under the command of the celestial youth who had revealed to him the treasure on the preceding night, and who now thus addressed him :

“‘By command of the royal sage I am here, O Prince, with a thousand dromedaries and two thousand trusty attendants, to aid you in possessing the treasure of the mountain-palace, and we are now at your service. For when I related to the sage the service I had done you, in obedience to his will that I should serve you, he replied that my service was incomplete unless I enabled you to remove the treasure within the seven days.’

“While the commander of the two thousand young men and the thousand dromedaries was speaking, the Prince of Moab perceived that his guide was come forth with his travelling staff, and immediately commenced the journey of the day by ascending the hill. Then Meshad was troubled, and said to the messenger of the sage : ‘Pray, Sir, bid my guide stay the seven days, or even three days, while we load these dromedaries, and despatch them to the land of Moab, to my father.’

“But the youth of the Gem of Light replied, as the sage had replied yesterday, ‘It will be fruitless to bid him stay when he is on King Solomon’s errand ; but you can delay your journey at your pleasure, and resume it under other guidance.’

“Then the Prince remembered again the words of Solomon, that unless he could resist all temptation to delay or abandon the object of his journey, he would never regain his Princess ; and, his love prevailing over his anxiety to secure the treasure, he exclaimed, ‘O, Adora, Adora !’ and requesting the youth to convey to the sage the assurance of his reverence and boundless gratitude, he hastened after the guide. Looking back, when they had reached the summit of the mountain, he saw the long train of dromedaries and their attendants moving away, unburdened as they had come.

“Thus had the Prince of Moab accomplished the second day’s journey on foot in search of his Princess ; and resisted for her love the strong temptation of Philosophy, and the stronger temptation of such Wealth as would have sufficed to command the services of all the Magi of Egypt, and all the scholars of the East Country, with all their learning and enchantments. But so true was the love of Meshad for his Princess, that during the silent journey of the third day he never repented that he had left behind so much advantage to continue the search for his absent bride ; and the remembrance of her gave him strength for the growing fatigues of his adventurous travels.

“During this third day, after having descended from the mountain and crossed a desert and a river, they travelled silently through a wilderness. Towards evening they approached a great wood, through which there appeared to have been made a wide road for the caravans of the merchants, or the march of an army. But its present condition indicated that it had been in disuse for a long time ; for although still clear of trees, the way was overgrown with brambles, huge trailing

plants, and weeds, which rendered travelling very difficult. Moreover the wood on each side seemed to be deserted by its usual tenants, and not a sign of life was to be seen or heard. No singing in the trees, no chirruping in the grass, nor voices of wild creatures from the jungle. All was as still as death. So difficult was travelling through this silent path, that the Prince found it impossible to keep pace with his more active guide; and, with all his effort, lost ground. Yet the guide would not wait, nor slacken his speed. Presently the Prince heard a rustling and crackling of branches on the right hand, and a terrible monster came forth from the jungle into the midst of the path between him and his guide. Meshad was not a lover of fight, but he had great courage. He only regarded the presence of the monster as an impediment in his way to the recovery of his bride, and crying 'O, Adora!' drew his good sword.

"The monster was a terrible creature to look upon, although bearing some hideous resemblance to a human being creeping on all fours. Its huge body was covered with long black hair, and its head with shaggy red. At first it barked like a hyæna, then reared itself and presented a horrible front. Extending a vast mouth in menacing anger, it disclosed rows of powerful teeth, and two great tusks growing from the lower jaw. It then gave utterance to a continued roar more terrible than the voice of the lion; but did not yet advance to the attack. The Prince might have fled, but he remembered that the danger stood between him and his guide who was to lead him to the Princess of Zobah. Now although Meshad was a Moabite, and worshipped Chemosh, he thought it unnecessary to have the image of the God before him when he prayed, and he now addressed his God as the all-powerful and omnipresent, who might be approached without the ceremonies which the priests enjoin. And it is the worship of images, the unholiness of the priests, and the heartlessness of heathen religions which make them abominable. And all this Prince Meshad had wisdom and piety enough to find out and believe. Therefore the Great God, the all-powerful and omnipresent, heard him and fortified his courage. The Prince judged, by the great bulk of the hairy monster, its long powerful arms, and terrible jaws, that its strength was more than he could cope with in close encounter; yet the courage of his heart forbade him to retreat. Nor did the monster appear in haste to commence the battle, but continued his loud roars at brief intervals, glaring with fiery eyes, and swinging his huge arms as in defiance.

"Now the deserted road, where this encounter took place, was terminated by the closed gates of one of the great cities of Egypt, for the wonderful vigour of the guide, and the power of love in the Prince of Moab, added to another chief cause to be mentioned hereafter, had enabled them to traverse much country in these three days. And now the towers and wall of the city, which commanded a view of the road, were crowded with spectators who had been attracted there by the loud and continued roarings of the terrible monster; and, while they are watching for the issue of the meeting, I will tell you something of the history of this savage creature.

“Some years previously a great traveller, returning from the interior of Africa, had brought with him the monster—at that time very young and more manageable—as a natural curiosity. It had been placed in a strong den, secured with bars of iron, in the gardens of the governor of the city, in the same way that lions and leopards and other wild creatures were kept there. But in the course of time the creature grew, and became very savage and powerful, and more to be dreaded than the strongest lion; for the bars which held him captive would have secured any lion, while this monster one night bent and broke them as though they had been of thin wire, and walked forth into the city at perfect liberty.

“In the morning, when the people began to move about, he destroyed all who unawares came within his reach, crushing them to the earth with one stroke of his powerful hand. The news and the terror soon spread, and a couple of horsemen, by command of the governor of the city, were sent against the monster, and encountered him in one of the streets near the gates which led to the wood. But, although they were armed with spears, the wild man killed both riders and horses, and broke their spears like reeds. He then passed through the gates and took possession of the wood, where he destroyed many who were passing that way toward the city. If the spearmen were unable to cope with him in the open street, still less could he be attacked with advantage in the forest; and all who were sent out against him were either destroyed, or, those who escaped came back in panic to tell of the frightful deaths of their comrades and of their horses. Either his shaggy hide was so tough that spear-points could not pierce it, or the presence of the hideous creature unnerved the hand that urged the thrust. Archers were sent forth, but instead of finding the monster where they might take aim at him, the monster found them unawares, and destroyed them by the stroke of his paw, or with great stones, or branches of trees. So that at length he was pronounced to be a supernatural monster, or incarnate evil spirit, whom no man could ever subdue by force. After that there were none found who dared to assail him, and the road through the wood was of necessity completely abandoned; the gate also which opened to it was kept constantly closed. The news of the terrible creature soon spread all over Egypt, and came to the ears of Pharaoh. Then he commanded that his magicians should drive away the evil spirit from his dominions by their enchantments. But this also failed; for those who approached the monster, to exercise their spells, fell as easy a prey as the spearmen and archers.

“Not even the wise Princess of Egypt, the daughter of the royal sage, could devise any means of ridding the country of so terrible an evil. But, at her suggestion, Pharaoh, her uncle, issued a proclamation, in which he promised that whoever overcame the creature should have the Princess for his wife, and become the co-heir of Egypt, providing he were handsome, accomplished, and of noble birth. But those who would have fearlessly hunted the lion and the leopard with the glee of sportsmen, paled at the mention of the monster against whom neither courage, nor arms, nor strength, nor enchantments, had

been able to prevail. Thus it was when the Prince of Moab found himself face to face with the terror of Egypt, and so many of the inhabitants of the city were attracted to the walls by the dreaded roarings, in time to witness the brief contest.

“While the monster sought to intimidate the Prince by his distant roarings, and gestures, and flaming eyes, the Prince bethought him to move cautiously aside to the margin of the wood, that he might intervene the trunk of a great tree between himself and his enemy, and then trust to his activity and good sword to gain advantage over superior strength, and savage ferocity. No sooner did he move than the monster came with speed on all fours to prevent his escape. The Prince only just accomplished his purpose in time; and while the creature with one of his great hands grasped the tree, and with a horrible snap of his jaws tried to fell his prey with the other, the Prince, by a rapid movement, avoided the uplifted paw and instantly struck at the wrist of the hand which held the trunk, so that the monster rolled backward to the earth. Before he could recover himself the Damascus blade had penetrated the hide and heart of the hideous creature and the brief combat was ended.

“A great shout of many voices now reached the ears of the victor, and, looking forward, he perceived, with surprise, the city gate at the end of the road, and the walls and towers, all crowded with spectators who thus applauded his triumph. The Prince immediately hastened forward after his guide, leaving the hairy monster where it had fallen and died. Before the travellers had reached the gates of the city, they were thrown wide open to admit them, and a great concourse of people accompanied them direct to the palace of the governor; for although the Prince of Moab by his courage and dexterity, and the help of God, had made a very easy conquest, he was become a great hero in the eyes of the citizens.

“The rapid news of the conquest of the beast had preceded the travellers, and the governor, the deputy of Pharaoh, received them at the gate of the palace. Judging that the venture had been undertaken in consequence of the royal proclamation, the governor congratulated the Prince with great deference on the success of his enterprise, supposing that he was addressing the future master of Egypt. But he himself had to convey to the Prince the first tidings of the honours which his achievement had earned; the latter having confessed that he had merely slain the beast because it had stood in the way of his journey, which had other ends in view.

“During that night they slept at the palace of the governor, who in the morning offered to send with the Prince a suitable escort of horsemen to lead him to Pharaoh, with a properly authenticated account of his victory, accompanied with the body of the monster, that he might claim the Princess of Egypt in accordance with the royal proclamation. For none could gainsay that the Prince was very handsome, accomplished, and of noble birth; and therefore completely fulfilled the conditions of the decree. But, while this offer was being made by the lieutenant of Pharaoh, and before the Prince had time to frame his reply, the old guide had taken his staff and

commenced the day's journey ; which, reminding the Prince of his errand, he exclaimed, 'O, Adora !' and, expressing his acknowledgments to the ruler of the city, he declared that he had not slain the beast for love of the Princess of Egypt, nor for ambition of empire, therefore would pursue his original journey without delay. So the Prince of Moab immediately followed the old man on foot.

"Again, you see, dear cousin, the Prince of Moab did not for a moment hesitate whether he should claim the Princess of Egypt, as the reward of his prowess, although her dowry would be the empire of Egypt ; for the Princess of Zobah had no rival in his heart for a moment. When such was the condition, he could willingly renounce all claim to even such a kingdom as Egypt, which was at least equal to that of King Solomon the Great. Thus his love to Adora had enabled him to overcome a great danger and to resist the temptations of Philosophy, of Wealth, and of Empire.

"The fourth day's journey was accomplished, like the others, without particular incident. The old guide maintained his wonderful vigour and unbroken silence. Adora engaged the thoughts of the Prince, and love gave stimulus to the journey.

"Towards evening they approached a castle whose outer walls enclosed a great extent of land. The guide went straight to the gate, as though it had been the destination of his journey, and, finding it open, led the way direct to an apartment where an inviting repast was awaiting them, and a handsome page, who proved to be dumb, served them. The Prince was surprised that no host appeared to confirm their welcome by his presence and countenance ; but resting satisfied with the example of his guide he felt no sense of intrusion. When the supper was finished the guide retired to rest ; but the Prince, feeling much refreshed, went forth while it was yet daylight, to seek introduction to the lord of the place, and at the same time to view the grounds of the castle, of which the passing glimpse when he entered the gate had filled him with curiosity and admiration.

"Passing through a fragrant grove of citron trees, he heard a great variety of beautiful birds singing in full choir their evening songs ; or calling to their mates to join them before darkness prevailed. Every branch appeared to send forth its music. Every pleasant walk, margined with the choicest flowers and shrubs, revealed some new object of interest. Shady arbors, and gorgeous pavilions whose gilded domes shone above the tree tops, invited research into their luxurious recesses. There were lakes of clear water, running rivulets, and high-soaring fountains. The castle walls enclosed a Paradise. Still no human being appeared, nor had the Prince heard the sound of a human voice. During his walk there had crept into his heart a sense of joyousness and hopeful love, and he began to feel an assurance that here his Adora was secreted, and that in this delightful retreat he should discover her. The idea gave eagerness to his search for his bride, and, at length, when the path led to the steps of a splendid palace, he hesitated not to ascend and enter. Even here the halls were tenantless, although furnished with the utmost magnificence. Emboldened by irresistible curiosity he traversed the silken carpets,

from apartment to apartment, with an increasing presentiment that here he should discover his Princess.

“At length the Prince of Moab heard a sweet voice before him, which thrilled his heart at once as the voice of Adora ; and, pausing, he listened to a song in her native Syriac ; the burden of which was that the heart of the singer was being consumed with love for an absent Prince, for whom she waited, to find her there, and share with her the sovereignty of a Paradise. The Prince was enraptured. ‘Surely,’ thought he, ‘this is the end of my journey, and here I shall find my lost Princess.’ With eager love he hastened forward to a splendid hall, which was furnished all round with luxurious couches, and in the centre of which was a large basin of marble, supplied with water as clear as crystal from the lips of a beautiful centre-vase of solid gold. The voice had ceased as he approached ; but now he heard it again, proceeding as from the waters, in these words :

“‘Ah, my Prince, hast thou at last found me to deliver me?’

“Then he beheld a most beautiful lady, arising like a newly-created goddess from the waters where she was bathing, and approaching him with extended arms, all blushing. Yet the eager love of the Prince was checked at this sight ; for although the voice certainly seemed to be that of his Princess, he could not imagine that even her delight at meeting him again could have overcome her recollection that she was but scantily clad in a bathing robe. Casting towards her one glance to assure himself whether she was his own Princess or not, he could not recognise his Love in that very beautiful bather. In bitter disappointment he exclaimed, ‘O, Adora, Adora!’ and, remembering that he was to overcome temptations, he turned his back upon the fascinating water nymph, hastened out of the hall, and did not slacken his speed until he was through the gates of the castle, which he now regarded as a place of enchantment to tempt him from his fidelity to the Princess of Zobah. After a while he lay down beneath a group of trees, and fell asleep with his hand upon the jewelled hilt of his sword.

CHAPTER V.

SARA'S STORY CONTINUED: A PANTHER, A LION, AND AN EGYPTIAN GIANT BESET THE PATH OF THE PRINCE.—HE REACHES A ROYAL CITY OF EGYPT.—THE POWER OF LOVE.—THE PRINCE IS TOLD OF THE DEATH OF HIS BRIDE, THE BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS OF ZOBAB.

HE Prince of Moab did not awake until his guide, passing the spot where he slept, early in the morning, touched him with his staff, and he arose to commence the fifth day's journey, rejoicing when he remembered that he had overcome the temptation of the previous evening. For now had he been able to resist the temptation of Woman's Beauty, as well as of Philosophy, of Wealth, and of Empire.

"Now I do not understand it myself, dear Tobias, but it is said that Woman's Beauty is the most powerful enslaver of all, where men are concerned; and that not only will philosophers abandon their wisdom, and rich men squander their wealth, but great Kings will sometimes neglect and risk empire in yielding to its fascination. If this be true, Prince Meshad had cause to rejoice that he had escaped this castle. And it appears to be true, for we know that even Solomon the Wise was seduced from the practice of the very wisdom which he taught, by the beauty of women.

"You will remember that during each day of this journey in search of the Princess of Zobah, all adventures had been reserved until the evening. On this fifth day, however, adventures awaited him early. Soon after the travellers had lost sight of the castle, they entered a rocky country full of chasms, caverns, and precipices, through which lay their dangerous path. Not only was the travelling difficult, but the sterility and desolation of the scene afforded a cheerless prospect to one who had yet to look forward for his breakfast.

"Presently, while they were picking their way through a cleft between two walls of rock, the Prince heard an approaching growl, as of some ferocious beast which had scented its prey, and was making eager haste to secure it. The sound proceeded from above, and the Prince, looking up, soon perceived peering over the edge of the wall of rock the burning eyes of a great hungry panther, with teeth all bared in savageness. The distance was too great for immediate attack, and as the travellers continued their way below, the fierce

creature kept pace with them and watched them from above, as though only waiting for a suitable opportunity for a spring. The Prince now saw that he must soon fight, as they were nearing the end of the chasm, and the cliffs on each side were diminishing in height. The guide, maintaining his usual silence, evinced no heed of the presence of the enemy, and, being unarmed, was not serviceable company in this imminent danger.

"The Prince had drawn his sword, and was emerging cautiously into the open country in expectation of a catlike spring from the panther, when he found that the animal had been discovered by another more dreaded enemy, who announced his approach with a terrible roar. A great lion pursued the panther as an intruder on his hunting grounds, the chase taking a direction in front of the travellers. Still the guide would not turn back to the shelter of the rocks, but continued to advance over the open country, where their presence could not possibly be hidden from the lion, when it had overtaken and slain the panther. The anticipations of the Prince were soon realized. The panther being overtaken and slain, the magnificent victor turned back to regain the rocks and was face to face with the travellers. Still the guide made no halt nor change of course. The lion stood for awhile gazing at them with uplifted head; then advanced a few steps, lashing his flanks with his tail and sending forth a low moaning sound. The Prince felt that his sling would be unreliable against such an agile enemy; he therefore halted with sword in hand. The guide passed onward unheeding of, and unheeded by, the noble beast, which appeared to keep its flaming eyes fixed upon the Prince. The lion again paused when he had approached nearer to the Prince, moaned, scratched up the earth with his talons, then crouched his head and foreparts to the ground, still lashing his sides with his tail. The Prince stood with the point of his sword advanced. A terrible loud roar followed: the sword missed its aim, and in a moment the Prince was prostrate beneath the mighty brute, with a paw pressing on his sword arm. Death appeared inevitable, yet the guide passed on heedless.

"Now I must tell you that there lived among these rocks an Egyptian giant, who is said to have been quite as big as Goliath the Philistine. He had been the terror of those parts for some years past, being not only a robber, but a cruel murderer. Bands of soldiers had been sent to capture or kill him, but the nature of the rocky country had always favoured his concealment if the enemy had been too strong for him, or enabled him to lay in wait in places of advantage to destroy them. Few travellers had escaped him. The men he always murdered and the women he sometimes carried alive to his caverns, where he had accumulated great wealth from the plunder of travellers.

"While the Prince lay helpless beneath the weight of the lion, expecting every moment to be crushed between its terrible jaws, a distant call was heard from the rocks, and immediately the beast arose and bounded towards it. For this lion was subject to the robber, and obedient to him like a faithful dog, having been trained and fed by

him from a whelp. Prince Meshad, marvelling at this unexpected respite, arose and looked in the direction whence he had heard the call, when he perceived the big form of the robber standing out against the background of sky, upon a rocky eminence. As soon as the robber saw that it was a man which his lion had abandoned, he began to descend towards him ; and now the Prince felt that another encounter awaited him, and prayed to Chemosh, the all-powerful and ever-present, to give him courage and victory. He remembered the similar plight of David, and, not trusting to his sword against such an adversary, he made haste to take from his pouch a pebble to hurl from his sling, and was ready for the combat before the robber had approached near enough for his aim.

“ Meantime the lion bounded and ran to and fro before his master like a playful hound ; crouching, springing, and roaring, but took no more heed of the Prince.

“ The Prince now advanced to meet the robber, as the shepherd David had advanced to meet Goliath with a similar weapon. When he was sufficiently near he whirled his sling, aiming at the face of the approaching adversary. The giant was only slightly wounded, and still approached, greatly enraged. Another stone slung with increased force and truer aim, entered the brain of the robber, and he fell to the earth. The lion had still continued to gambol about his master, and when he fell, bounded to him, and finding him lifeless, crouched down, and commenced a piteous howling.

“ The Prince had no desire to await a second attack from the huge beast, and hastened to overtake his guide. Nor did the faithful lion abandon the lifeless body of his master to pursue the Prince, but remained crouching beside it so long as the group was discernible in the receding distance.

“ Towards sunset the travellers approached a great and magnificent city, which was one of the residences of the royal family of Egypt. On entering the city the guide led the way direct to the royal palace, and, after shewing to the guard a slip of papyrus, impressed with the seal of King Solomon, was immediately ushered into the palace, the Prince of Moab following. Pharaoh was not then staying in the city, but the Queen of Egypt held her court there, with her niece the Princess of Egypt, and her daughter, the wife of Solomon, who was at that time on a visit to her royal parents. When the presence of the guide was made known, and the Queen of Israel had received a message through him from her husband, King Solomon, command was given that the Prince of Moab should be royally served, and he was led to a suite of apartments where many attendants waited to receive his commands. When the Prince had refreshed himself with food, and had bathed, he was presented with magnificent robes, that he might appear before the Princesses arrayed in a fashion befitting such a Prince in such presence.

“ Now it was already known to the Egyptian Princesses, the news having preceded the travellers, that it was this Prince Meshad who had overcome the terrible monster of the wood ; and that according to the decree of Pharaoh, which the heiress of Egypt had herself

suggested, he might claim the hand of that Princess. Therefore it is not surprising that his arrival at the palace should have awakened intense interest there, and soon afterwards, throughout the whole city, when the tidings had spread. The officers and servitors of the palace already looked upon the Prince as the husband of their future Queen, and treated him with corresponding reverence. But the Princess herself knew that he came not to claim that reward, nor had encountered the monster of the wood for her sake.

“That night the Queen of Egypt gave a grand entertainment to her court and the lords of the city in honour of the arrival of the Prince of Moab; and the Princess of Egypt received him with great distinction and favour, conversing with him on the events of his journey, but expressly avoiding all reference to its object. She intimated that she had been already made aware of his visit to her father, the Sage of the Caves, and enlarged on the great treasury of learning which was gathered there in his possession. She also discoursed on the exhaustless wealth of the antedeluvian mountain-palace. During the whole evening she devoted herself especially to his entertainment, displaying, though not without corresponding modesty, her great wisdom and delightful accomplishments. She sang to him in a most ravishing voice, and performed on various musical instruments with wonderful skill.

“Although the heart of the Prince was true to the bride whom he sought to regain, he could not deny to his understanding that the Princess of Egypt deserved all the praises of her wise father, and was, indeed, a goddess both of beauty and wisdom, and the most accomplished lady he had ever met. At times the brightness of her queenly countenance was clouded by a shade of no less lovely melancholy, when she looked upon the Prince and remembered the secret of his journey. For although this Princess was too virtuous and noble to wish to withdraw his heart from its legitimate love, she found that she herself had begun to love him, and all the more for that very virtue which she knew would render her love hopeless.

“What a marvellous and unaccountable passion is this love, dear Tobias. No heart appears to be able to resist its influence when it once approaches. The stronger the obstacles that are opposed to it, the stronger it appears to grow. Reason, which controls other feelings, has no rule over this, when it once gains possession of the heart. With all the knowledge which this wise Princess possessed; with all her wonderful arts of enchantment which gave her control over some of the hidden powers of nature, she could not keep this enchantment of love from her own bosom, although she knew what sorrow and suffering it must bring her. And, as I said before, she loved the Prince of Moab the more for that very fidelity which made the return of her love so hopeless. And when she retired that night from the society of the Prince, she, who was mistress of so many powerful arts, mistress of so much wisdom, so much wealth, and, prospectively, of a great empire, was herself a slave to hopeless love.

“Now the Prince could not but discover all this during the evening, and he knew that he could now, if he chose, gain possession of the

treasures of Learning, and of Wealth, of the power of Empire, and of affectionate, noble, and virtuous Beauty, if he would accept them and relinquish the search after the Princess of Zobah.

“During the morning of the next day Meshad saw nothing of the Princess of Egypt ; but her cousin, the Queen of Israel, invited him to her reception-saloon, that he might relate to her the adventures of his journey. Then the daughter of Pharaoh again congratulated him upon his arrival at the palace, and the great reward which he had won in the prospective possession of the heiress of Egypt. The Prince was now obliged to explain that the object of his journey was not to claim so glorious a prize as the heiress of Egypt, but to recover his missing bride the Princess of Zobah. The Queen professed great astonishment at this declaration, and replied that she could not see, even in his betrothal to the Princess of Zobah, any reason why he should not claim the Egyptian Princess, according to Pharaoh’s proclamation, especially as he had evidently found great favour in her eyes. ‘And this,’ said the Queen, ‘although the Princess my cousin is fully informed of the real purpose of your journey, and of your prior love to the Princess of Zobah. And certainly if your Princess loves you, as you are worthy to be loved, she will not wish to make your union with herself an obstacle to the magnificent advantages which the love of my cousin will bestow upon you, in the future sovereignty of so great an empire as Egypt. And where shall another be found to compare with its Princess in loveliness, in virtue, and in wisdom? Believe not, dear Prince, that the Princess of Zobah is worthy of this great self-denial, if her selfish jealousy would have you reject the glorious Princess of Egypt, who, I may own to you, already loves you, and should, therefore, be so much more desirable to you. Have not I, the Queen of Israel, and daughter of Pharaoh, as good a claim to the undivided love of King Solomon, as the daughter of the King of Zobah has to yours? Yet has my husband married many other Princesses, who brought him no kingdoms, no vast treasures, no great wisdom ; no, nor such unmatched beauty, as the niece of Pharaoh offers thee.’

“Then the Prince of Moab was much distressed that the Queen of Israel had become the advocate of his inconstancy to the Princess of Zobah ; for he feared she might grow angry at his obstinacy ; especially as she had confessed to him that the Egyptian Princess was inclined towards him as her husband ; and in her resentment would probably refuse the further services of his guide, who appeared so necessary to the successful completion of his journey. He, therefore framed the most ingenious excuses he could devise for the continuance of his search, acknowledging the magnitude of the honour proposed to him, and his unworthiness to possess so rare a Princess as the heiress of Egypt, whose beauty and virtue claimed first and undivided love. He then prostrated himself before the daughter of Pharaoh, and besought her with tearful eyes that she would prevail with the Princess of Egypt to command his guide, at once, to resume and complete the journey on which King Solomon had sent him. Then the Queen, instead of expressing resentment at his obstinacy,

came down from her elevated seat, raised up the Prince of Moab, and, mingling her tears with his, declared that the journey and errand of the guide from Jerusalem were already accomplished; that the Princess of Zobah, who was certainly detained at that palace when Meshad started from Jerusalem, had only yesterday secretly escaped with one confidential eunuch, probably to seek her way back to the kingdom of her father; that they had been pursued as far as the rocky country, but had been there captured and slain by the giant robber, in sight of the pursuers, who were powerless to prevent the terrible tragedy, and had barely escaped with their own lives to tell the heavy tidings.

“The Queen of Israel had scarcely finished speaking, when the Prince sank down at her feet, with all the appearance of sudden death. He was immediately carried to his chamber and attended by the physicians; but all their efforts failed to restore any appearance of animation. The news immediately spread consternation throughout the palace, and the Princesses were overwhelmed with grief.

CHAPTER VI.

A GRAND WAGER BETWEEN THE PRINCESS OF EGYPT AND HER COUSIN, THE WIFE OF KING SOLOMON.—THE QUEEN OF ISRAEL LOSES HER FAMOUS IVORY CHARIOT WITH ITS BEAUTIFUL ARABIAN HORSES AND ALL THEIR TRAPPINGS.—IT IS DISCOVERED THAT THE PRINCESS OF ZOBAB IS YET ALIVE ; AND SHE IS RECOVERED BY HER PRINCE WITH THE AID OF THE PRINCESS OF EGYPT.



YOU have been wondering, dear cousin, by what means the unhappy Princess of Zobah had so suddenly disappeared from her father's palace on the night of the wedding, and now I will tell you.

"It happened that on that same evening the Queen of Israel, who, as I said, was on a visit to her father's court, had requested her cousin, the Princess of Egypt, to practice for her amusement the wonderful art which had been perfected by the twelve magicians ; and which the Princess had mastered when studying with her father, the Sage. The Queen wished to have presented to her the representation of her husband, King Solomon, as at that moment engaged. The Princess, to oblige the Queen, caused the desired scene to appear in the chamber, and they beheld King Solomon sitting alone in his study in a meditative attitude, with an expression of chagrin upon the royal countenance. The Queen then requested that the Princess would discover what were the thoughts of Solomon, and what troubled him. This also the Princess was able to accomplish by the superiority of her power over that of the King, and she thus replied :

" 'The King, your husband, it appears, has made unsuccessful application, in times past, for the hand of the beautiful Princess of Zobah ; and is aware that to-day she is wedded to the Prince of Moab. He is angry at this preference, and, in revenge, contemplates carrying away the Princess this very evening from the bridal chamber, by supernatural means which are at his command.'

"Now although the daughter of Pharaoh had by this time become accustomed to tidings of the frequent new amours of her husband, she was seized with a strong passion of anger and jealousy at this particular instance, and begged her cousin to anticipate her husband's arts, and cause the Princess of Zobah to be immediately transported to Egypt. To accomplish this the Princess retired to her chamber to perform the necessary enchantments. By means of a certain incantation she brought into her presence a fairy whom she commanded to hasten instantly to the bridal chamber of the Princess of Zobah, to seal her eyes with sleep, and bring her hither without

delay. The Princess of Egypt then returned to her cousin the Queen, and they began to discourse on the fickleness of the loves of men, the Queen maintaining that all men were alike faithless in love, the Princess maintaining the opposite opinion, and declaring her belief that King Solomon was not a fair example of mankind in that particular. She quoted the instance of the husband of the Princess of Zobah, and asserted her belief that he would be inconsolable for the loss of his bride, and would be faithful even to her memory, if he should never recover her. This the Queen of Israel as confidently doubted, and offered to wage her ivory chariot, with its Arabian horses, and all their furniture, against her cousin's necklace of large pearls, that the Prince of Moab could not resist five temptations which she would name, but would, if exposed to them, readily abandon his search after his bride. The Queen, knowing the tastes of the Prince of Moab, then named Philosophy, which had hitherto been his chief pursuit; great Wealth, which she believed all men valued in the proportion that it exceeded their present means; Empire, which she believed carried with it as great a desire for extension as wealth; Beauty of strange women, which she declared more powerful still; and, lastly, the four temptations combined, in one opportunity, which would have quadruple force, and prove irresistible to any son of Adam. The Princess of Egypt then paused to consider her power to present these several temptations, and the probability of the success of the Prince of Moab in resisting them, and then accepted the wager; the Queen stipulating that his first sorrow should be allowed to expend itself during seven days, before the commencement of the operation of the temptations.

"When, at the expiration of a few days, the Princess of Egypt discovered that the Prince of Moab had determined to apply to King Solomon for counsel, she despatched to the King a genie who was subject to her, to communicate her wish that the Prince should be placed in charge of this genie to travel a long journey on foot, and overcome dangers, and five temptations, as the condition of his ever recovering his Princess. Thus the old man who became the guide of the Prince was a genie, and the servant of the Princess of Egypt, instructed in the way he should guide the Prince of Moab into dangers and temptations. The castle of the fourth day's journey was altogether a creation of enchantment, raised by the beautiful Lady of the Bath, who was a fairy owing obedience to the Princess of Egypt.

"On the morning after the marriage the Princess of Egypt went into the chamber where the fairy had lain the sleeping Princess of Zobah, and caused the beautiful sleeper to awake. Great was the astonishment of Adora when she recollected the events of the preceding day and yet found herself in an unknown place, with the beautiful strange lady leaning over her. The Princess of Egypt anticipated her enquiries by informing her that she was now in one of the royal palaces of Egypt, whither she had been conveyed by enchantment, to deliver her from an adverse power, which would have carried her away from her Prince for ever. But now, if she felt sure that her Prince really loved her, and would seek her in spite of intervening

dangers, she might be assured that in a few days he would be guided to her, and their union be completed.

“Yet, even with this assurance, and although she had great faith in the love of the Prince of Moab, Adora was naturally much troubled at the extraordinary adventure, and became sick with disappointment when she found herself so far from her Prince, and that she must remain parted from him for days to come. This sickness prevented her from leaving her chamber, and the Princess of Egypt became her companion and comforter, soon learning to love her as a sister, for her amiability, her sweet beauty, and her strong attachment to her Prince. The loving descriptions, also, which Adora gave of her husband, and the great faith which she evinced in the fidelity and stability of his devotion to her, produced in the heart of the listener a corresponding respect for the Prince of Moab; and, although in honour she was bound to cause him to pass strictly through the five temptations, according to the compact with the Queen of Israel, she caused the period of the journey to be abridged to five days instead of fifteen or twenty, which was the usual time necessary for the accomplishment of so long a journey.

“Now at the close of each of the first four days, when the guide appeared to have retired to repose, although there remained behind the semblance of the old man, the genie actually presented himself to his mistress the Princess of Egypt, to report the progress of the day, which the Princess immediately communicated to her cousin, the wife of Solomon.

“Thus the ivory chariot with its beautiful steeds, and their furniture, appeared each day in more imminent danger of changing hands; and the Queen trembled at the probable anger of King Solomon, when he should learn that she had wagered away this magnificent present of his early love, and the pride and admiration of Jerusalem. She then conceived a scheme which was certainly not fair towards her royal cousin; the object of which was to prevent the completion and issue of the temptations, the probabilities of which were now so greatly against her. Her plan was to get the Princess of Zobah to escape from the palace to meet her husband on the way, and turn back with him homeward, and so leave the fifth temptation unaccomplished.

“With this view she instructed one of her confidential eunuchs to visit the Princess of Zobah, and communicate to her from the Queen of Israel, that the Prince of Moab was then little more than a day's journey from the palace. That if she waited for him to reach her there, he would have to encounter a great danger; but that, if she chose to leave the palace secretly, the eunuch should guide her to her husband, and they might return together to her native city. These tidings at once restored the health of Adora, and with joyous expectations she embraced the plan. That same night she left the palace clandestinely with the eunuch for her guide.

“When the Princess of Egypt found that her captive had fled, and learnt by her arts in what direction, she immediately despatched two armed horsemen to overtake her and bring her back. But shortly

before the arrival of Prince Meshad at the palace, the two horsemen had returned with the tidings that the first sight they had gained of the fugitives was on the borders of the rocky country, where, before they could overtake them, the eunuch had been encountered by the dreaded robber, and slain, the mules captured, and the Princess carried away apparently also dead.

"The Queen of Israel was certainly grieved when she heard of this result of her scheme; but found a hard-hearted consolation in the increased hope that, after such an event, the Prince of Moab, although not turned back, would now be more likely to accept the reward which was due to him by the decree of Pharaoh; and thus win for her the coveted necklace of large pearls, in addition to the continued possession of her famous ivory chariot, with its beautiful Arabian horses, and their magnificent furniture.

"You are already aware, dear Tobias, that her dishonourable scheme had not yet won for her the wager; for Prince Meshad appeared to be dead; and, if dead, had died faithful to his bride, and in the moment of victory over the fifth temptation.

"When the Queen of Israel had related to her cousin the interview which had brought about this sad event, still more was the Princess's admiration confirmed for one capable of so much love and constancy, and she immediately went to the chamber of the Prince to exercise her arts in his recovery if he were not really dead. This noble and generous Princess had no care now who possessed the necklace of large pearls or the famous chariot, so that she could restore to health the good Prince Meshad. And so pure was her virtue, that in spite of the love which she had conceived for him, she felt that she would rather restore him for the Princess of Zobah, whom he so dearly and worthily loved, than for herself.

"She therefore first satisfied herself that he lived, and, before restoring him to consciousness, set about discovering by her enchantments the condition of the Princess of Zobah at that moment. Finding that she also was yet alive in one of the dens of her fallen captor, she applied means to arouse the Prince from his deadly swoon. When he was sufficiently recovered to understand her words, she said:

"'Take courage, noble Prince, for the Princess of Zobah is yet alive, and only awaits a speedy deliverance at thy hand.'

"These words inspired the Prince with hope and renewed strength; but so prostrating were the effects of his swoon, that he could not have undertaken fresh adventures for some days, had not the Princess served him with rare medicines, compounds beyond the knowledge of the physicians, and then he was so strengthened that he was ready presently to undertake the deliverance of his bride.

"Again the Princess of Egypt commanded the presence of the genie who had been Meshad's guide from Jerusalem, and bade him lead the Prince direct, in a chariot, to his captive bride, and enable him to recover her without combat with the lion.

"When they approached the rocky country they perceived in the distance the body of the giant robber, lying where it had fallen slain

by the fatal stone from the sling of the Prince of Moab ; and the noble lion still crouched beside it, mourning for its dead master, as might be seen when frequently it raised its head, and, with its muzzle turned towards heaven, sent forth deep and piteous moanings. Passing, without interruption, this touching and extraordinary group of death and sorrow, the guide led Prince Meshad to a cavern, where they found the sorrowing Princess of Zobah with her feet bound together.

“You can imagine, my dear cousin, better than I can describe, the joy of the meeting of these true lovers.

“When the feeble Princess had been refreshed with some food and wine, her Prince carried her in his arms to the chariot, and they returned to the city, each counting the present joy a full recompense for all the sorrows which had been the early fruit of their love.

“And here, dear Tobias, I think my tale ought to end. There is certainly more of it, but I do not like it, and think it would be better left untold. I want you to remember what I have narrated, and to be as true to me as Prince Meshad was to the Princess of Zobah. If you tell me that you will, I will believe you, and shall be sure you will find me again, as the Prince of Moab at last found his Princess. For although he had King Solomon to go to for advice, and you have not, yet you have a greater than Solomon, and a more powerful, and a more just, for your guide ; for you can go to God Himself, and He will direct you to find me.”

“I am very glad, my love,” replied Tobias, “That you will believe me when I tell you that I will be quite as true to you as Prince Meshad was to his Princess Adora. No temptation shall ever cause me to forget this promise, or to break it. But you must, please, tell me the remainder of the story, for I am quite eager to know what became of the good and beautiful Princess of Egypt ; and how the Queen of Israel excused herself to the King for the loss of the famous ivory chariot, with its Arabian horses and rich furniture.”

“Then, if we have opportunity, I will finish the story to-morrow, for now I am too weary, and the evening is far advanced.”

The boy then arose, and giving his fair cousin many kisses in confirmation of his promise, and many more in acknowledgment, as he told her, of the interesting story which she had related to him, they entered the house, and began to remember with sorrow that the next day would probably terminate for an unknown period the joys which they had discovered in each other's society and love.

CHAPTER VII.

SOLOMON VERSUS SOLON.—LITTLE CHILDREN EXCELLENT PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHERS. — CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY OF PRINCE MESHAD : GRIEVOUS SICKNESS OF THE PRINCESS OF EGYPT.—THE SAGE HER FATHER DISCOVERS THE NATURE OF HER DISTEMPER.—THE QUEEN OF ISRAEL NEGOTIATES HER CURE.—KING SOLOMON ANGRY WITH HIS WIFE, THE DAUGHTER OF PHARAOH.



ON the morning of the next day, Tobit, with his wife and son, accompanied their cousins to the camp of the captives, expecting that they must then take sad and final leave of each other. The young lovers, especially, were in deep affliction; although Sara, again and again, with smiles amid tears, expressed her firm belief that God would lead her dear Tobias to her in His own good time; for she had most complete childlike faith in the constancy of her cousin's love, and in the divine confirmation of their union. Great therefore was the joy of both families when they learned the unexpected tidings that the encampment of the captives would remain unbroken another day, and that they might, therefore, spend one more night under the same roof.

The lovers hastened, immediately, to the delightful solitude of yesterday's retreat, to reap to the full the anticipations and the passing reality of another joyous day.

The words "passing reality" claim a thoughtful pause. What is the past or the future compared to passing reality? Is not the past, being past, vanity of vanities, whatever were its joys or its sorrows? Compared to the present it is but as a dream. However unconscious of wisdom, these children were practising a true philosophy in embracing to-day's brief lease of joy, unmarred by anticipations of to-morrow's griefs. The future has no reality: it has not become truth: it is a mirage: we cannot know it. The passing reality, whether it be sorrowful or joyful, is all that is real, all that we can grasp. If it be sorrowful, and tempered with hope, then it is not all sorrow, but hope becomes a passing reality of budding joy. But otherwise hope is also a vanity and a deceit. If it be joyful, tempered with dread of the future, it is no longer all joy, but fear becomes a passing reality of budding sorrow. The present reality is not vanity. It is all that is. For immortality and eternity it is all, whether of bliss or of woe. What care we for the joys of the past, if the present experience be of sorrow? And the present is not joyous if we are dreading the sorrows of the future. And how brief is the present! It is not a day, nor an hour, nor a minute; but a moment. It is no

longer than the word "Now." Hope bears no fruit till it is no longer hope, but reality. Solon of Athens was not wise when he declined to pronounce a man happy or miserable *at Present*, because his condition might be reversed in the future. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," said the preacher, the son of David, King of Israel. Then his present was clouded with the vexation of exhausted joys, which being past had become vanities. But had the sunshine of joy warmed his heart again, he must have said, "O, joyous present, my past joys, *and sorrows too*, are (not were) vanity of vanities." The great lesson of his sermon is that men should make the most of joys which the present places within reach; for he repeats again and again, as the result of his experiences and meditations, "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour," "for that is his portion." That is, that he should not constantly neglect the present for the uncertain, unreal future, as the present is his only portion. But although the preacher repeats this as his conviction, more than once, in his book of Ecclesiastes, his commentators assert that, as many times, he meant just the reverse of what he wrote. Still we cannot endorse the advice as to the *mode* of enjoying the present, so oft repeated by the preacher. Nor did the young cousins practise it. The eating and the drinking formed the least part of their present and anticipated joys. Nor do we count as joys those evil pleasures which are falsified by the conscience, and by the assurance that they will bring forth sorrow and remorse.

If this philosophy be true, that we should seek to enjoy to the full all proper and reasonable pleasures that are in present reach, then are little children the most practical of philosophers; who suffer not the griefs of the past to cast their shadows on the sunshine of the joyous present; nor temper those joys with the dread of future evil; but make the future a present joy by the enchantment of hope. This constitutes the emphatic happiness of childhood. And thus, once more, these two Hebrew children enjoyed complete happiness in each other's loving companionship.

"Now, my fair cousin," said Tobias, "you will have an opportunity to tell me the remainder of the history of Prince Meshad;" and thus Sara resumed her story:

CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY OF PRINCE MESHAD.

"The story which I related to you yesterday, dear cousin, was called 'The Story of the True Love of Meshad, Prince of Moab.' Now, I may almost say that I finished that story last evening, although I did not finish the history of the loves of that Prince. My object in telling you that story was, that you might have the Prince of Moab in your memory, when I am gone from you, as an example of a true lover, such as I expect you to be; and, also, that, like him, you may confidently expect to find me again if you will be true and persevere. But what remains to be told has no such objects. I cannot help wishing that the remainder had not been true; and I have no

pleasure at all in telling it. And yet the Prince, perhaps, was not to be blamed; nor the Princess of Zobah; nor even the Princess of Egypt. Yet I do not like it, and it seems to spoil the story that I told you yesterday."

Here the fair speaker paused, and looked musingly and abstractedly into space—into the sweet morning air.

"Don't like what, dear cousin?" asked the listener. "Tell me what spoils the story. Did he marry the Princess of Egypt after all?"

"I will tell you," resumed Sara, looking from vacancy into his enquiring countenance. "When the Prince of Moab returned to the palace with his recovered Princess, and they presented themselves before the Princess of Egypt, she and Adora flew into each other's embrace, and wept together like two sisters; one of whom has just returned from the marriage ceremony and weeps for joy, while the other, about to be left all alone, weeps in sorrow. Adora's tears flowed from gratitude and love and happiness; the tears of her friend from love and sorrow. The Prince of Moab, upon his knees, took the hand of the Princess of Egypt and kissed it with great respect, expressing, very eloquently, his great obligations to her for the inestimable happiness which she had been the means of restoring to him.

"Tahpenes, the Queen of Egypt, and her daughter the Queen of Israel, although the latter had forfeited her ivory chariot, now pressed the Prince and his bride to prolong their stay at the palace, and refresh themselves after their great fatigues. But the Princess of Egypt, although she loved them both, did not join in the solicitations for their stay, but continued to weep on the bosom of Adora. So they consented to remain at the palace for a few days, when it was arranged that messengers should be immediately despatched to the King of Zobah, to inform him of the recovery of his daughter by the Prince of Moab.

"And, now, speaking of the tears of the Princess of Egypt, which I said flowed from Love and Sorrow, have you never considered what unlikely relations Sorrow has? I have often thought that Sorrow and Joy must be sisters, and Love the parent of both. There are different Loves, and they all appear to have Sorrow and Joy for their children; and although Sorrow may sometimes be the youngest, she generally proves the strongest of constitution and the most long-lived.

"Now as to the Princess of Egypt; you will remember that on the previous day, when she found that she could not avoid loving the Prince of Moab, she had absented herself from his company, and only came out of her retirement to attend him when he was supposed to be dead or dying. After the interview just described she again adopted the same course, and shut herself up in her own apartments, where the Princess Adora spent much time in her company, and each day loved her more and more. But while the Princess of Zobah gained strength and was very happy, her dear friend the Princess of Egypt grew sick, and could not disguise that she was striving against some great trouble of the heart. The Princess of Zobah in her affectionate anxiety implored her friend to reveal what secret trouble

thus preyed upon her health ; but the Egyptian Princess continued silent on the subject, and each day grew more pale and feeble. Adora would weep over her couch, embracing her, and enquire if there was no remedy for the sickness of one who had been so powerful to restore the happiness and health of others. 'No, my dear sister, there is no remedy,' would be the patient reply. Then Adora was disconsolate, and forgot her own happiness in sorrowing for one whom she had learned to love so dearly.

"The Princess of Egypt grew weaker from day to day, and there indeed appeared no remedy against impending death ; for she would not allow the physicians to approach her ; and, if she had, they could not hope to discover a remedy where she, a greater physician than any of them, had declared there was none.

"The Queen of Egypt had no better success than Adora in finding out the mysterious malady. Pharaoh came in haste from Memphis to the sick couch, but all were alike unsuccessful. Then speedy messengers were sent to the Sage of the Caves desiring him to hasten to the side of his daughter, who appeared to be at the point of death.

"Now the Sage might have learned her condition without these messengers had he happened to have put in operation the enchantment of the twelve magicians : but he was so much engaged in other studies that he had awaited without anxiety the arrival of his daughter at the appointed time, which was approaching near. Therefore when the messengers arrived and delivered the sad news from his brother Pharaoh, the Sage was much distressed, for he loved his beautiful and learned daughter even more than his books, and commanding the services of a genie who owed obedience to his mystic knowledge, he soon reached the royal palace.

"I will not delay my tale to describe to you the great reverence and welcome which the Sage received from his royal brother, in whose favour he had declined the splendid empire of Egypt. I need only tell you that the anxious father soon discovered the exact nature of his daughter's malady. It was one more powerful than all the enchantments of the Magi. It was secret hopeless love.

"When the Sage informed his daughter of his discovery, she declared that she would rather die than confess it, and implored him to keep the secret inviolate. But the Sage immediately made a confidante of the Queen of Israel, and requested her to discover the secret in a prudent manner to the Princess of Zobah, and win the aid of her whose love for the Princess of Egypt might possibly overcome all selfishness, and make her a powerful physician in the cure of his beloved daughter.

"You already guess, dear Tobias, who the Princess of Egypt loved so greatly, so hopelessly, and yet so virtuously, that she chose to die rather than discover it. She had arranged with her cousin, the Queen of Israel, to subject the Prince of Moab to five great temptations ; but in his virtuous triumph, and only because of his virtuous triumph, she herself had fallen into the snare of love.

"Now, had the Princess avowed her love, I should have pronounced her a base and treacherous woman ; base in her heart and treacherous

to her friend the Princess of Zobah. But she was willing to die for the misfortune of her love, and therefore I pity her love, and admire her virtue.

"When the Queen of Israel had this matter entrusted to her management by her distinguished uncle, she was much pleased, for it was a business quite to her liking. That same day she sent for the Princess of Zobah, and said :

" 'My dear Princess, you see that my cousin, the heiress of Egypt, is approaching death ; what would you sacrifice to save her if it were in your choice, for I know that you love her ?'

" 'O, Queen of Israel,' replied the Princess, 'I would give my own life to save the dear Princess of Egypt, who has saved both me and my Prince already.'

" 'But,' said the Queen, 'consider that if you gave your life for her, you would be giving your Prince also, even all that she has rescued for you. For what joy could you find in the grave, where you could no longer possess your Prince ?'

" 'Yet, O Queen, I would give my life to save the dear Princess, for I love her more than I love my life and all its joys.'

" 'Then you can surely save her,' replied the Queen, 'and I will test the sincerity of your words, my dear Adora. Remember that if you gave your life, you would lose not only it, but your Prince. Will you give your Prince to save her, and retain your life ?'

" 'O, Queen,' replied Adora, in some astonishment, 'I am ignorant of the meaning of your words. I declare again that I would give my life to save the Princess from death ; but the Prince, my husband, is far dearer to me than life.'

" 'But, my dear Princess, if you sacrificed your life, you would sacrifice your Prince also ; for, as I have said, you cannot possess him in the grave. I will now make it known to you that the Princess of Egypt secretly loves your Prince, as her father the Sage has discovered. Will you persuade your Prince to return her love ?'

"Then the Princess of Zobah changed countenance, and her tender look of compassion for the sick Princess of Egypt gave place to one of anger. 'Alas ! I thought the Princess more true to me,' she exclaimed ; to which the daughter of Pharaoh replied :

" 'Is she not true to you when she endeavours to die without revealing her secret ? She has determined to sacrifice her life to her truth to you. Have you, or I, or my mother the Queen, or my father Pharaoh, been able to discover the secret of her sickness ? No. Even her father has discovered it only by his mystic means of knowledge. Her love and truth to you have sealed it in her heart. You, my dear Princess, offer your life for her in words while she is sacrificing hers to her love for you in deed. And your changed countenance seems to say that you will let her die.'

"Then the Princess of Zobah burst into tears, and was so troubled that the Queen of Israel arose and tried to comfort her. She then led the Princess to her chamber, and left her there alone to decide how she would act, whether according to the impulse of friendship, or of jealousy.

"Now, dear Tobias, I am sure that if I had been the Princess of Zobah, jealousy would have prevailed in my heart, and I would never have consented to share your love with the most virtuous Princess in the world; and I think I should have been quite right. For, suppose the case reversed, and, loving me as I know you do, somebody else wanted to share me with you, how should you feel if there were a possibility of his success?"

"Shocking thought!" replied he.

"Yes, and men are not more jealous in such matters than women; therefore it was a very hard thing which the Queen of Israel wished the Princess to undertake; even to persuade her own husband to take another wife; for that is what she meant."

"Yet it is regularly done," observed Tobias.

"Regularly done!" exclaimed Sara. "Do you think it right?"

"I tell you, my fair cousin, that if you were to take another husband, it would turn my hair grey at once. So I think it wrong."

"Yet you seem to be treating the subject in a funny manner."

"Not so, my love, but I am rather amused, and much delighted at the warmth and good reason with which you defend women's conubial rights."

Then the boy arose and soothed his fair cousin with kisses; declaring that she should be his only love, and that if she wished him, ever so, to love another, he would not; no; not were it even the virtuous Princess of Egypt. He would rather be a mourner at her grave.

"Then now," said Sara, "I don't mind telling you that the Princess of Zobah was more yielding than I should have been; and that the Prince of Moab was more compliant to her than you would have been. For when she had struggled with her own heart a great deal, and kept herself away from the sick Princess of Egypt a whole day and night, and had considered how closely the Princess had kept her secret to herself, even preferring to die rather than injure her friend; how she had nobly exercised her power twice to preserve her for her Prince and complete their union; how affectionate and sisterly she now proved herself to the bride who stood in the way of her own happiness; then Adora began to overcome her jealousy, and even to think of entreating the Prince of Moab to restore the Princess of Egypt to health by his love; on condition that he should never love her quite so much as he must love his first bride."

"The day after the conversation which I have mentioned, the Queen of Israel visited the Princess of Zobah in her apartments, and told her that since she would not try to save the Princess of Egypt, that good, noble, and virtuous Princess would certainly die before many days had passed, and would die true to Adora, for she would yet on no account consent that the secret which her father had discovered should be revealed to the Prince of Moab. Then Adora wept again, and said:

"O, Queen of Israel, you know not how my heart is torn with sorrow for my dear friend and preserver. O that I could save her! I have tried to consent to ask the Prince to return her love, but you

know not how hard it is to be willing to share the love of a dear husband with another !'

" 'Yea,' replied the Queen, 'I, the wife of King Solomon, know well what it is to retain only a small share of the heart and attentions of my husband ; although, certainly, not by my own will. But my rivals are those who have done me no good service, such as the Princess has done you ; nor do they love me as she loves you ; nor are they noble and virtuous like the peerless Princess of Egypt. Surely you might be happy with this one sharer of your husband's love !'

" 'O Queen, I will indeed conquer my selfish jealousy, and entreat the Prince to save my sister the Princess of Egypt by sharing with her his love : for I am sure the Princess will continue a true sister to me, and my husband will not love me the less.'

" Then Adora, having completed her resolution, went to the sick Princess, and found her so feeble that she could not rise on her couch, but stretched forth her arms to embrace her friend, chiding her in a low voice for having absented herself so long, and added :

" 'What new trouble has befallen you, my love, that you have been weeping so ?'

" 'No trouble, now, my dear Princess ; but I have discovered the secret of your malady, and hope to produce the remedy.'

" At these words the Princess of Egypt, ashamed and distressed, covered her face, and said :

" 'Who told you this ? My dear sister forgive me ! I shall soon die for my fault.'

" 'No, my dear Princess, you shall not die. My Prince owes you his love ; I owe you his love and mine. We will not be jealous rivals, but loving sisters, loving the same husband.'

" But, O dear Tobias, this tale is most painful to me, and I must make its conclusion very brief. I wish I had not begun it. I wish it had not been true. The Princess of Zobah, after a great deal of tearful entreaty, prevailed upon her husband to marry the Princess of Egypt. It is true they lived all very happily together ; but it is so dreadful to think of such a true Prince having two wives.

" After this they all remained in Egypt, the name and title of the Prince of Moab being changed to Shishak, Prince of Egypt. In the course of years he became Pharaoh, the two Queens preserving a perfect equality both in rank and in the affections of their husband."

" And what," asked Tobias, "became of the famous ivory chariot ?"

" I will tell you. When the Queen of Israel had fairly lost the wager, she mentioned the circumstance in a letter to her husband, King Solomon, and asked him to get her another ready by the time she returned to Jerusalem. But the King appeared to have been very angry at the transaction, and, in writing to her afterwards, said :

" 'Is ivory as plentiful as sycamore wood, and gold as cedar, that you ask me to build you another such chariot ? And as to the steeds there are none other in all Arabia and Egypt to be compared to them. And must I make war against the King of Tyre that I may wrest from him sufficient precious stones to replace the jewelled trappings ? Know that the chariot, with its steeds, and their harness, were worth a

rich kingdom, and were justly the pride of Jerusalem. Surely it was in a moment of folly that I consented to let them go down into Egypt, where you have so foolishly lost them, and thereby deprived Jerusalem of one of the glories of my reign. Are you aware that your father's present of the city of Gezer was not equal in value to the steeds alone? I had thought you upright and wise, and only you among all the women that I have known; but now I have written 'One man among a thousand have I found upright and wise, but a woman among all this number have I not found.'

"This letter so enraged the Queen, that with tears she besought her father Pharaoh to let her remain in Egypt all the remainder of her days, for she was determined not to return alive to her husband, who had treated her so disloyally, and now insulted her about a chariot. Pharaoh was not very well pleased with his son-in-law Solomon on several accounts; and, therefore, listened favourably to his daughter. And then it was that others who were disaffected towards the Hebrew monarch took refuge in Egypt: and that land continued to be a refuge to those who fled from Solomon after the death of this Pharaoh, when Prince Meshad, or, as he was called in Egypt, Shishak, became Pharaoh. Then it was that Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, became a refugee at his court until after the death of Solomon, when he returned and gained the greater part of the Hebrew kingdom."

This concluded Sara's Story of the True Love and Further History of the Prince of Moab; and the captive Hebrew children spent the remainder of that day in joyous rambles, and mutual assurances of eternal constancy.

CHAPTER VIII.

SARA AND HER PARENTS DEPART FOR MEDIA.—THE SORROW OF TOBIAS.—TOBIT HAS EXTRAORDINARY DREAMS.—HE IS SUMMONED TO THE PALACE OF THE KING OF ASSYRIA.



THE next day the encampment of the captives was broken up, and the march through Nineveh towards Media commenced. The parting was very painful, especially to young Tobias. All day he was inconsolable for the loss of his lovely and much-beloved cousin. He now learned practically the meaning of her words that Love is the parent of Sorrow as well as of Joy. Deep and bitter was his sorrow; but not without the allay of Hope. From his earliest lisping infancy he had been taught to pray; but until now he had never understood true and earnest prayer. This sorrow taught him the solace of true prayer, accompanied with implicit confidence in the Supreme Being to whom his prayers were addressed. From the hour of this parting his childhood ceased, and his nature became exalted, and his heart ennobled with the emotions of pure love, of Faith, and of communion with his Creator and Preserver.

On the evening of the day after the departure of the captives, Tobit was sitting, as usual, beneath his porch, resting after the day's toil. The interior of his house had now resumed its ordinary aspect, and its tenants their usual occupations. The banks of the Tigris were again tranquil, and the great city on the other side had returned to its everyday life. While Tobit pondered and recalled the events of the past few days, he dozed and slept. At first the images of his waking thoughts seemed to be marching out of his brain in broken and distorted order, or rather disorder. Nineveh became Jerusalem, and the procession was in honour of a triumph of King Ahaz. The lions, instead of struggling and roaring, were as tame as oxen, and carried women upon their backs, including his wife Anna. Instead of mules drawing waggons of spoils, there passed a cavalcade of headless horses drawing their own heads in cars. Himself was a captive in Raguel's stead, and was very sad of heart. Tobias he had lost. Then the scene and circumstances were suddenly changed, and he was entertaining Pharaoh at his house, and felt on terms of intimacy and ease with his royal guest. Again it changed, and he found himself an outlaw in a desolate place, all alone, hiding from pursuers who sought his life. His wretched lurking-place was a comfortless cavern,

high up in the side of a precipice ; a place of refuge from all men, for all men had become his foes. He seemed to have hidden there for a long time, and become familiar with misery. From fear of detection he could only come forth at night, and it was long since he had felt the cheering influence of sunshine, or looked up at the blue sky ; it was long since he had embraced his dear wife and son, for they were far away from his care and protection, and lost to him. In his dream he was just looking forth from his hiding place, and nothing greeted his view below but shapeless rocks faintly revealed by the starlight, and chasms of hollow blackness, where the winds warred and howled and sent up frightful noises. And nothing above cheered him, for the stars seemed only to wink at his misery. As he came forth and looked towards the far distant city, where he had left his dear ones, he spoke aloud a prayer to Heaven, who seemed to have forgotten him. While he prayed he heard voices from the crags below, and, ceasing, found that he was discovered by two Assyrian soldiers, who had been lying in wait. They were soon close by him with drawn swords and he had no defence against them. In his haste to escape he slipped over the precipice, and felt all the agony of falling through the gloomy space, when, suddenly, with a gasp and a start, he gained his feet unhurt ; and, opening his eyes, was delighted to find that he had only dreamt, and was that moment recovering himself from falling off his seat in his sleep.

But, to his astonishment, there were actually two Assyrian soldiers of the King's body-guard approaching him. Their swords, however, were sheathed, and they shewed no signs of hostility. When they approached near enough they saluted him, and enquired if they were addressing Tobit the Hebrew. Receiving his reply, they presented to him a letter, bearing a seal which represented a Hercules stabbing a rampant lion. The messengers, declining the Hebrew's invitation to refresh themselves, then returned across the river, and Tobit perused his letter, which ran in these words :

"The Assyrian officer who conversed with Tobit the Hebrew on the night of the great storm, sends, hereby, the King's command, that the Hebrew present himself at the royal palace at the close of to-morrow's audience. One of the eunuchs of the palace will wait upon the Hebrew early to-morrow to conduct him to the King's presence."

It will be supposed that Tobit was much perplexed and astonished at this document. "What," said he to his wife, "can be the purpose of the King but evil against all the children of Israel? Has his officer informed him of my light esteem of earthly renown, compared to the glory of a pure and upright heart ; and does the King construe my reasoning into contempt of his high estate? Yet if he were angry, and intended me hurt, it is more probable that he would have caused me to be seized at once, and punished without warning. Possibly he wishes to converse with me about the writings of our prophets, which I mentioned to his officer."

"I cannot hope so," replied Anna, "you know you are generally too sanguine and trustful. You are also too careless and imprudent

in your conversation with strangers. I much fear that the King intends to question you as to some unguarded remarks which may have dropped from you in your conversation with his officer. Let me implore you now for once to be cautious, and suit your conversation to your hearers, and not to let pass any expressions that may be distasteful to the hater and conqueror of our people, who will be able to resent your boldness with cruel punishments. I wish you would be guided by me, and speak with more circumspection. I shall have no peace now until this new danger is past. Consider, what interest can the King of Assyria take in the sayings of the seers of a people which he hates and despises? And if he cared to learn anything of such matters would he not enquire of the learned priests who are now his slaves and captives? I much fear that you have led yourself into some mischief, and pray you may come through it in safety."

Tobit had already dismissed his fears about the morrow, and these words of his wife were insufficient to recall them. Instead, he felt his heart enlarge with the native confidence of his princely family, which had not been unused to the presence of the Kings of Israel, and could move amid the splendour of courts with bold and easy bearing.

CHAPTER IX.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PALACE GROUNDS.—THE SONG OF THE MERRY HEBREW GIRLS.—TOBIT'S RECEPTION BY KING SHALMANEZER.—HIS APPOINTMENT TO THE OFFICE OF CHIEF PURVEYOR TO THE KING.



IN the morning Tobit was conducted into Nineveh by one of the King's eunuchs. Around the magnificent palace of Shalmanezer the mansions of his chief Princes and officers were clustered, at considerable distances apart, amid delightful grounds, so that the view from the royal residence on every side included ever-varying scenes of beauty and splendour; and Nineveh, in this quarter, was literally a city of palaces. And these grounds were planned and maintained in such magnificence, because, although allotted to the mansions of the King's officers and the Princes of his household, they really were also portions of the grounds of the royal palace, whose terraces overlooked them all, and they were all open thereto, and were at times traversed by the King. To one of these mansions, which the eunuch stated to be the residence of the King's chief Purveyor, the Hebrew was conducted.

"Was it then," asked Tobit, "the King's chief Purveyor who sought shelter at my house from the storm? I had supposed him an officer of the King's guard."

"I know not," replied the eunuch; but I was commanded to bring you here that you might prepare for the King's presence, and the servants of this house have been commanded to wait upon you."

The Hebrew was then led into an apartment where he found provided a rich robe and other articles of Assyrian court dress. When he was arrayed in these and was refreshed with a collation of fruits and wine, his guide informed him that there yet remained two hours to the time appointed for his appearance before the King, and invited him to spend the interim in walking through the grounds which surrounded the mansion.

When they descended the steps at the back of the stately edifice their ears were greeted with a delightful confusion of sweet sounds. An avenue directly in front revealed here and there glimpses of fountains and cascades, which made soothing music and invited approach. From a path to the right came the pleasing strains of a full choir of birds, like the wild melody of the woods on a bright Spring morning; but here localized and accumulated in spacious aviaries. From an avenue on the left proceeded a still sweeter but more distant

concert of human voices, accompanied by musical instruments, which the Hebrew, to his surprise, recognised as in the language and music of his native land. Towards these singers they bent their steps, finding much to admire as they passed along. The flowers which bordered the walks were of the most rare and beautiful kinds. The trees and shrubs which limited the view right and left were also the most choice which flourished in that clime, some being importations from distant lands. The fragrance was the fresh breath of *mille fleur* mingled with the pure morning air. Here and there at uniform intervals, towering above all the other trees, was some rare and beautiful specimen growing from a huge tree-vase, whose ample interior afforded abundant space for the extension of its roots. These gigantic tree-vases, raised upon lofty pedestals, were composed of vast fragments of stone held together with fastenings of iron. Their magnitude, as viewed from below against a background of sky, impressed the mind with wonder, and suggested the skill and strength of Titan sculptors. This walk led to more open grounds, and to a beautiful lake whose entire bottom was paved with slabs of alabaster, which caused the pure water to present a uniform tint of delicate azure.

In the midst of the lake was an island, whence had proceeded the sounds of Hebrew music; but the concert had now altogether ceased. Proceeding along the margin of this lake they presently reached where steps of alabaster descended to a gondola, rocking upon the clear waters and straining at its cable like a beautiful thing of life struggling for liberty. At every view it presented most pleasing curves, and was lavishly enriched with colours and gold. Into this they descended, and paddled over the rippled surface of the lake towards the island. Beneath them darted in all directions abundance of various fish, and around them floated beautiful water-fowl; conspicuously, majestic swans, like personations of poesy claiming the rule of this happy domain.

The island was almost entirely compassed with trees of dense foliage; so that from the lake and surrounding grounds the interior was hidden. But when they had secured the gondola at the landing place, and proceeded through the screen of trees, they found themselves in a garden which extended over the whole island. It was a garden of joys, which presented pleasure to each of the several senses at once. Most beautiful flowers delighted the eye: the air was laden with their sweet exhalations: the trees already presented delicious fruits: and among the branches many birds feasted or sang. Several springs bubbled from the earth, and, guided by art, flowed in little rilllets to the lake. In the most pleasing situations were erected shady arbors, beautified with fragrant trailing plants. The Hebrew was enchanted as he traced the delectable walks of this Paradise. They then passed through a shady plantation of cinnamon and myrrh trees, beyond which came into view a rich pavilion erected in the midst of a flowery meadow. As they came nearer to it, voices were heard more and more distinctly from within. Presently the music again struck up, and a group of Hebrew girls came dancing forth

with timbrels, tabrets, cymbals, and harps. They were some of the fairest of the captive maidens who had been reserved to be the slaves of the King's principal officers. Their garments were of pure white; their head-dresses were garlands of jessamine and of the lily of the valley; their beauty was such as the poetic Arab imagines he shall behold in the Houris of his future Paradise.

When they perceived Tobit in the disguise of his new court robes, approaching them with a eunuch of the palace, they immediately ceased their music and their dancing, and concealed their blushing beauty with their veils. But the eunuch, with words of encouragement, desired them to proceed in their amusements for the additional entertainment of their visitors as well as themselves. Then again the cymbals clashed, the chords vibrated, and the dance was resumed. It was one of the dances of Israel, and Tobit was enchanted.

When this was concluded they all sat down upon the flowery earth to rest, and then the eunuch explained to Tobit that the chief Purveyor having died during the King's absence from Nineveh, the office had for some time remained vacant. But that the King had now appointed a successor, and had given these captives, and others, to be his servants and slaves. That, as the new officer would not take possession of his house until to-morrow, the slaves had been permitted to spend this day as a holiday, and to ramble at their pleasure through the domain; and that a certain party of them, shunning the society of these merry ones, had separated themselves, and had retired to other parts of the grounds, to spend the day in melancholy, and complainings at their lot, singing only plaintive songs, and playing only doleful music, without dance or mirth.

While the eunuch was yet speaking the maidens all arose, and, when he was silent, one stepped forth and sang to the accompaniment of a single harp. The following is a translation of the words, which appeared to be a satire upon the melancholy of their companions who had forsaken their company:

SONG OF THE MERRY HEBREW GIRLS.

The Winter rains had ceased awhile,
The threat'ning clouds had pass'd away,
Hush'd was the cold North wind;
And nature smiled for one short day,
Though it was only Winter's smile;
And why spend such a day in sorrow,
Though it may rain again to-morrow?

'Twas not the smile of joyful Spring,
When early flowers in meads appear,
Loading the air with sweets;
No budding woods proclaimed it here,
Nor bee, nor fly on gorgeous wing,
And yet, why spend to-day in sorrow,
Because we may be sad to-morrow?

The earth was drear, the air yet keen,
The bee still sheltered in his cell;
The fly of gorgeous wing

Still lay entombed in ebon shell ;
 'Twas but a daylong wintry sheen,
 Yet need we not indulge in sorrow,
 Because we may be sad to-morrow.

Such was the day ; when forth I stroll'd
 To view the long hid azure sky,
 And, lo ! unto my path
 Perceived a little warbler fly,
 And chirp, as though he shouted " Hold ! "
 And said, " Why spend to-day in sorrow,
 Because it may be drear to-morrow ? "

I watch'd him hop from spray to spray,
 With active joy and seeming pride
 That I regarded him ;
 And cheerful chirp, as though he tried
 His voice, ere he began the lay :
 " Why should we spend to-day in sorrow,
 Because it may be drear to-morrow ? "

And then, as though he sang to me,
 He swell'd his little throat with song,
 And forth the music flow'd ;
 So hearty, mellow, sweet and strong,
 It spoke like words of joy and glee,
 And meant, " Why spend to-day in sorrow,
 Because it may be drear to-morrow ? "

And still he sang, and seemed to say,
 " Hail ! pleasure of the present day ;
 Although 'tis not the smile of Spring
 That cheers my heart and prompts to sing ;
 Although our leafy bowers above
 Contain not yet our nests of love ;
 Although it will be drear again
 When biting winds bring back the rain,
 Expected gloom shall not destroy
 The sweetness of the present joy !
 I'll to the woods, and all day long
 Enjoy the mirth of cheerful song, "

And when his melody was spent
 He spread his wings and fled away
 Towards the singing woods ;
 In songs renew'd to spend the day,
 Still chirping sweetly as he went,
 As saying still, " Why spend in sorrow
 To-day, for dread of drear to-morrow. "

My sisters, so let us be glad,
 Although the future may be sad.
 In mirthful dance and song of joy
 Let us our holiday employ ;
 And not spend this free day in sorrow,
 Because we shall be slaves to-morrow !

As she ceased all the maidens repeated the chorus still louder, with accompaniment of all their instruments, singing :

" We will not spend to-day in sorrow
 Because we shall be slaves to-morrow. "

After which the eunuch and the Hebrew, with expressions of applause to the songstress, passed on and left them.

The hour was now at hand when Tobit must present himself at the

palace, and they stayed not to explore the further delights of this island garden. Nor, after recrossing the lake, did they yield to the allurements of many pleasant paths which invited them to the discovery of new surprises. Only once did they stop for a few moments when they approached, unseen, one of the groups of sad maidens who had separated themselves from their merrier companions, because they could not join in their holiday mirth. Their harps were hung upon the tree branches, and one was singing a plaintive song, in which she lamented with deep pathos her exile from the glorious land of her birth, with the loss of dear parents, and hopeless separation from the chosen of her heart. While the fair girl sang, her voice frequently faltered, and her companions all wept.

The sad group struck the heart of Tobit with sympathetic sorrow, and he himself could scarcely restrain his tears when he remembered how much more cause the captive daughters of his people had for lamentation than for mirth on that day. But he had no time now to dwell on such thoughts. He soon found himself ascending the steps which led to the terrace of the King's palace, at that time the most magnificent structure in the world. They passed between the great stone lions, crossed the terrace where many of the King's officers and tributary Princes sauntered in twos and threes, discussing the most interesting topics of the hour; and entered the palace, whose every turn and angle presented some huge sculptured monster, or symbol, suggestive of strength, royalty, wisdom, divinity or eternity: the great human-headed winged bulls; the Hercules and lion; gigantic figures of the King; the eagle-headed Nisroch or Assyrian Jupiter, and the winged circle; besides long friezes representing the victorious battles of the Assyrians. They reached the guard room which protected the King's audience-chamber, and passed between two files of the body-guard in their magnificent uniforms, armed with drawn swords.

But whatever of magnificence had yet met the eye of the Hebrew was entirely eclipsed when he entered the great hall of audience. He had been familiar with the splendours of the court of Samaria; and also of Jerusalem when he went up yearly to that city before the captivity; but the visible majesty of the successors of Solomon was very dim indeed compared to that of the Great King as Tobit now beheld him, in the midst of the vassal Kings and Princes of his empire, and the ambassadors of distant potentates, whose addresses he had been receiving.

In a few minutes after the entrance of Tobit the audience was concluded for that day; the doors were thrown open, and all, except the officers of the guard and the King's ministers of state, gradually withdrew. Then the eye of the King rested upon Tobit, and he commanded one of his attendants to bring him before the throne, where the Hebrew prostrated himself, and so remained until the King said:

"Arise, Tobit; look around, and discover to me the officer whom you sheltered on the night of the great storm."

At these words the attendants of the King all glanced from one to

another, not understanding to what event the King referred. And Tobit, arising, also glanced at every face present, but failed to recognise the person whom he sought. He then turned to the King, to declare that the officer in question was not present, when he at once recognised in the royal countenance that of the supposed officer of the guard. Quicker than it can be told, the events of the stormy night recurred to his mind; his familiarity with the disguised King, and the free expression of his philosophy that an upright heart was better than the majesty and wealth of Assyria. At these recollections he again prostrated himself in amazement, without uttering a word, until the King, understanding the meaning of his embarrassment, again commanded him to arise, and said:

“Tobit, I have sent for you to give you an opportunity of testing the worth of the opinions which you expressed to me on the night of the storm. You then said you believed yourself already happier than the King; as though it were impossible that any advancement could afford you more happiness than you already possessed. I shall want to learn from you, hereafter, if you will not enjoy yet greater happiness as the King’s chief Purveyor. You have already seen the house which belongs to that office, with its grounds and its slaves. You will be immediately instructed in your duties; but above all things remember that I expect my table to be supplied constantly with that excellent bread which you and your wife alone appear to have the skill to compound.”

The Hebrew again bowed himself before the King and said, with his face to the earth, “O, great King, I know not how I ought to express my gratitude for the benefits which your Majesty has bestowed upon the humblest of your slaves. I pray that the great God may bless the reign of your Majesty abundantly, and that it may long endure in great splendour, and in mercy to thy servants of my nation.”

The King then commanded that the appointment of Tobit to the office of chief Purveyor should be entered on the records, together with certain special privileges which he granted at Tobit’s request, whereby he was permitted to continue the worship of God according to the customs of his people, and to keep inviolate the Sabbaths and holy feasts.

That same day it was made known to the courtiers that the King had preceded his victorious army on the return from Samaria, in the disguise of an officer of his guard, with only one attendant Prince, when he had been overtaken by the storm while yet on the western bank of the Tigris. A flash of lightning had struck down the King’s horse under him, and when the King fell his attendant immediately dismounted to his aid. The loud peal which accompanied the flash so terrified the other horse that he bounded away beyond control. As soon as the attendant saw that his royal master was unhurt he pursued his steed, by command of the King, and the King, altogether losing his company in the chase, had made his way alone to the cottage of Tobit, near which he found himself, and there awaited the termination of the storm, as we have seen.

CHAPTER X.

ANNA'S ANXIETY AT THE ABSENCE OF HER HUSBAND.—BELAARON AND HIS DAUGHTER.—ANNA REPROACHES HER HUSBAND FOR HIS RECKLESS GENEROSITY.



ANNA'S dread of the consequences of her husband's summons to the palace remained unabated after his departure. He had always been a bold exponent and defender of his religion, among a people who despised it; and had often brought upon himself the ill-will, not only of the idolatrous Assyrians who happened to be his neighbours, but also of his own people, who were mostly followers of Baal, and jeered at his strict observance of the almost obsolete practices of the old law. His wife, while approving the secret observance of the old religion, would have had her husband hide it, as a thing out of fashion, and not to be made a matter of dangerous advocacy. And thus it happened that whenever Tobit was downcast at some petty persecution, he found no encouragement in his wife, who, so far from sharing his burden with him, added materially to his annoyance by constantly upbraiding him with imprudence.

Thus, after he had started across the river, in obedience to the King's summons, she felt very pettish with him at the danger which she believed he had incurred by his unguarded conversation with the Assyrian officer. She felt more and more convinced of the superiority of her own judgment over that of her husband, and that if he had only listened to her, and adopted her advice, the danger would never have arisen. In her heart she continued to blame him all the day. But as evening approached, and her watching discovered no sign of his return, her love prevailed over her chiding spirit, and she began to feel all a fond woman's anxiety for the safety of an imperilled husband. She forgot all her imagined causes of complaint in her fears for his safety.

Again and again she went forth and looked towards the ferry in mingled hope and doubt, gradually working herself into a fever of apprehension that her prognostications had at last been realized, and her husband become a victim to his imprudent honesty. At length the food which had been prepared for his dinner awaited him as his supper, and still he came not. The sun was setting and her watch was rewarded with no appearance of the desired one. The darkness of night began to prevail, and as the ferry became less distinct her hopes declined in the same degree, and her fears gained strength.

Then she necessarily ceased watching, and, retiring into the house, gave free rein to despair. "He is gone," thought she, "and whither shall I follow him? He is doomed, perhaps, to die—is perhaps already dead. O, how can I learn his fate?"

Tobias, too, was absent. His grief for the loss of his fair cousin had drawn him to the solitary places where they had rambled or sat together; especially to the spot where she had related to him the charming tale of the true love of Prince Meshad for his example. There he lingered in solitary and sad enjoyment of the silent evening, silent except for the plaintive love-song of the nightingale, so consonant with his own feelings. Thus the anxious mother and wife was left alone in her painful alarm.

At length she heard voices, and recognised among them that of her husband, approaching the house. She flew to him and embraced him as one recovered from the dead. He returned in the same dress that he had worn when he started in the morning, having left behind at his new mansion the robes of his new office in which he had appeared before the King.

There were two strangers with him; an old man, and a young woman his daughter. Both appeared very faint and very poor. Tobit introduced them to his wife as unfortunate fellow-captives of the first exodus, whom he had met in Nineveh, and invited to share his hospitality and spend the night at his house.

Now, another ever-recurring cause of complaint with Anna was, that although her husband was himself so poor, he never met one of his deserving countrymen in distress but he must needs add to his own poverty by sharing his little with him. She constantly urged that charity should begin at home, and end there too, in their straitened circumstances. Relations, she admitted, were entitled to their hospitality; but that to attempt to relieve the wants of all the poor who applied to him, was to wrong his own family. But her present joy at recovering her husband in safety prevented the usual complainings from arising, even in her heart, on this occasion; and she cheerfully increased the provision for the evening meal, afterwards providing for the repose of the strangers during the night.

Tobit answered his wife's enquiries respecting the events of the day by merely informing her that the bread which the Assyrian officer had tasted on the night of his visit, had met with so much approval, that he had been sent for to arrange for a regular supply to the King's table. And in reply to her enquiry—after the strangers had retired to rest—as to who they were, and how long her husband intended to entertain them, he said:

"The name of the old man is Belaaron. I overtook him in a street of Nineveh, with his daughter, as I was approaching the gate on my return. Saluting them, I perceived that they both appeared very destitute, and, entering into conversation with the old man, I discovered that he was a beggar, leaving the city, according to custom, to sleep outside the walls. I was filled with compassion and sorrow that one of our nation, who appeared to have seen better times, should have to sleep in his old age in the open air, exposed to the

bitter night-cold of this month, and, especially, that his more tender daughter should be so exposed. I therefore invited him to cross the river with me, and accept the shelter of this house, which he thankfully consented to do, and as we came along he gave me an outline of his history. He is of the tribe of Dan, and had been a priest of Baal before the captivity. But since that event he has suffered much distress in this land, being obliged to engage in the meanest occupations of the city to obtain bread for himself and his daughter. At length old age rendered him unfit to labour, and he became reduced to beggary. Then, as he lay at night in the open air, contemplating the stars of heaven, he began to reflect on the harmony of the universe, and to perceive that the whole must be the work of one creative and ruling Power. In time he came to the conclusion that his life had been spent in a wicked and senseless idolatry; for which cause he had been abandoned by the ancient God of his people, who must be the One and only true God. He then, although so late, repented of his mis-spent life, and began to point out to his daughter that all their sufferings, and the sufferings of their nation, had certainly arisen from their adoption of a false and apostate religion, and their disregard of the warnings of the prophets of the true God. He and his daughter are now worshippers of the God of our fathers, and observers of His law so far as is practicable in this captivity.

"And now, dear wife, you ask how long I intend to entertain my new friends in this house. I must tell you that I believe God has directed these two repentant people to me, and that He has prompted the resolution which I have formed to invite them to stay in this house as long as they please; which I doubt not will be during the remainder of the days of the old man, that he may finish his days in peace, and in the confession of God's Providence."

Anna had listened to the outline of the old man's history with interest; but the intimation with which her husband had concluded it, caused on her countenance an expression of surprise and dissatisfaction, and she exclaimed:

"Husband, what is this you tell me? Can we, who find it so difficult to live in decency ourselves, afford to provide a home for two beggars?"

"Gently, my love," he replied, "Let not our guests, no, nor the ever-present God, hear you object to the evident course of His own Providence and Mercy. God has sent these poor people to me just when He has given me the means to accomplish His mercy towards them; for have I not told you that I am in future to be Purveyor to the King's table, the profits of which office will fully enable us to provide for these poor people?"

"It is but like you, Tobit," said she impatiently, and beginning to weep; "you are generous to all but your own; and therefore your generosity is a sin. You know that there are so many things which we require, and which you might obtain for us, if you were not constantly giving away the means. You have long promised me a shawl from the looms of Babylon, and, again and again, when you have nearly accumulated the means to fulfil your promise, you have preferred

the poor to me, and parted with the money. Now you tell me you have obtained the means of supplying your home with more comforts, and you immediately determine to waste it on two beggars. And how will this small house accommodate two more inmates? Tobit, you are worse than mad !”

“Have patience, my wife, and I doubt not that I shall yet some early day be able to present you with a shawl from the looms of Babylon, and a robe too. It is better to obtain the approbation and blessing of God than to secure riches.”

“Tobit, I have no patience with your doings, nor with your sayings.”

Still he divulged no more of his secret than by replying with a smile, “We shall see, my love ;” promising himself a rich pleasure in the surprise he had in store for his wife, whom he dearly loved in spite of her frequent exhibitions of ill-temper and opposition to his charitable views.

And why not love her? She was the same who had captivated his heart in his youth. Her infirmities had existence then, but they were in germ, or they were only less conspicuous because of the greater prominence of the charms of youthful beauty, and the dim-sightedness—some say blindness—of love. And had her infirmity of temper been as visible in those days, he would still have chosen her above all other women. He rejoiced in the favour of the King, not for his own sake, but for the sake of the pleasure it would afford his dear wife and son, and the means it would become of relieving the many poor and despised of his nation. The latter pleasure he had already begun to experience in providing for Belaaron and his daughter. The other grand delight he deferred only until to-morrow.

CHAPTER XI

TOBIT BECOMES THE KING'S FAVOURITE.—HE DECIDES THAT TOBIAS SHALL VISIT THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM.



NOW that the authority of the Great King was fully established throughout his extensive dominions, and acknowledged by all the nations which had been tributary to his predecessor, the name of Shalmanezer became as glorious in peace as it had been in war. The arts and philosophy were encouraged with royal liberality, and even honesty flourished at the court of Nineveh. Tobit, when his true character was established in the eyes of the King, became one of the royal favourites, and a powerful benefactor of the deserving people of his nation. He could now also indulge in abundant acts of charity without incurring the censure of his good wife Anna, who was clothed to her heart's content in the rich fabrics of Babylon, and adorned with the golden ornaments of the most skilful jewellers of Nineveh. She was the mistress of a large mansion, with a score of Hebrew damsels for her attendants. These were halcyon days with Anna; but not with her son Tobias. True as Prince Meshad, the temptations of wealth and beauty were powerless to attract him from the fond recollection of his absent cousin. The delights of his father's house had diminished force while she remained undiscovered. And whenever he had the opportunity, which was very frequently, he would abandon the attractions of his new home and its splendid surroundings, to trace in solitude the paths which they had trod together on the other side of the river. There he would seek out the spots, now sacred in his eyes, where they had sat and conversed together; and, reclining his head there, would indulge in sweetly sad and sadly sweet reverie; recalling her narratives and conversation in her own sweet tones, and bringing before him the dearly cherished memory of her loved countenance and person.

Tobias had revealed to his father his love for his beautiful cousin, and implored that he would exert his now powerful influence to discover the locality of the settlement of Raguel and his family; to which his father replied that as he was shortly to be intrusted by the King with a mission into Media, he would personally seek tidings of his kinsman. Meantime he desired his son to be patient, and satisfied

that if Sara's was a true love he need be under no anxiety about her ; for that she had but to represent to her father Raguel that her cousin Tobias would claim her, when, according to their law, her father had no power, even if he had the will, to bestow her upon any other suitor, as Tobias was her nearest of kin. "And now, my dear son," continued he, "I wish you to leave this matter to the management of One who will care for those who rely upon His guidance. My cousin Raguel is an upright man, and is among the few who have not been led away, by the fashions of idolators and evil doers, from the laws of our fathers ; therefore I have confidence that he and his family will be followed by the protection and blessing of the God whom he has continued to serve faithfully ; and I doubt not but he will flourish in the land of his captivity, even as I and my family have been blessed and exalted. Leave the child Sara to the care of Heaven, who will in good time bestow her upon you, if it will be well for you ; and listen now to my wishes concerning yourself. It is my will that you devote your attention to the acquisition of such learning as will enable you to occupy fitly the improved station to which it has pleased God to exalt us. I shall provide you efficient teachers, both of our own nation and of the Assyrians. After that I shall seek the King's permission that you travel to the land of our fathers. The reign of the King is now the reign of peace, and the times are likely to be favourable for this pilgrimage. My heart has ever yearned towards the holy city of Jerusalem, the noble city of David, now restored by Hezekiah to the splendour of the days of Solomon. As I can no longer hope to visit again that holy place, I will seek to send you, my son, that your eyes may be blessed with the sight of that which is denied to me. In the city of the Temple of God you will offer sacrifices on His holy altars, and enjoy the converse of His priests and prophets ; for now that the wise and righteous Hezekiah sits on the throne of David, I am informed that the pure worship of our fathers has been restored, all traces of idolatry swept away, and that the prophets constantly preach to the people in the streets and in the temple of the holy city. I will give you letters to one of the dear friends of my youth, who will bless you for your father's sake, and rejoice with you in the means which God and the King have given me of alleviating the sorrows of the captivity of our people. You will be the bearer of my offerings to the House of God and His servants, and the receiver of their blessings. You will visit the monuments of our glorious history, and the tombs of our great Kings ; and I will pray God to bless your journey and restore you to me improved in wisdom and in holiness. If you set your heart to seek wisdom, my dear son, and resist the temptations of youth, the Lord will send His holy angel to guide and protect you, and your reward will doubtless be His approbation of your virtuous love, and the accomplishment of your desires."

When Tobit first spoke of this projected journey, his son was troubled at the prospect of travelling still further away from the land of the captivity of his cousin. Had the journey been into Media he would have rejoiced. But by the time his father had finished, he had resigned himself to patience, and his heart was filled with delight at

the prospect of being able to pray in the holy temple at Jerusalem for the restoration of his dear cousin ; for it was customary to suppose that the temple was filled with the especial presence of God, and that there He was more ready to hear and answer the prayers of His people than in any other place in the universe. In connection with his father's words Tobias remembered the dear and encouraging words of his beautiful cousin, that, although he had not Solomon to go to for advice, yet he had a greater than Solomon, and a more powerful, and a more just ; for he could go to God Himself, and He would direct him how to find her.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GENIE ASMODEUS APPEARS IN ECBATANA, AND IS STRUCK WITH THE BEAUTY OF SARA.—HE PERSONATES NATHAN THE HEBREW.—EDNA'S APPROVAL AND SARA'S ABHORRENCE OF HIS SUIT.



IN the ancient writings of the Hebrews it is distinctly recorded that Sara, the daughter of Raguel, was beloved by a spirit, or demon, more generally designated by the people of Persia, Mesopotamia, and Arabia, a genie. In those writings he is called Asmodeus, or the destroying god, because so great was his love for the fair mortal, and consequent jealousy, that he destroyed all those who subsequently approached her as successful lovers, until he was himself finally restrained by a superior Power. But, excepting these instances, the genie was said to have been no enemy to human kind; but, on the contrary, mingled with men disguised as one of them, as a good fellow and boon companion. He was one of those, described as the sons of God, or immortal beings, who, before the Deluge, loved the daughters of men. Several ancient histories make allusion to those days when the daughters of men were so beautiful that the gods became enamoured of their charms. Since the punishment of the wickedness of the Titans the licence of such lovers has been restrained, and the virtuous are guarded by a barrier which is impregnable to them, while the loose of thought alone receive their visits in impure dreams.

This Asmodeus was said by the Rabbins to have been the son of Tubal-Cain, ben Lamech, whereby we see that they regarded that Titanic smith as synonymous with the Grecian Vulcan, the son of Juno, the god and founder of the smith's craft. But Asmodeus was a genie of the Fire and the Air long before the creation of Adam. The Rabbins also relate that Asmodeus once personated King Solomon, and occupied his throne for awhile, having driven the real King out of his kingdom. The temptation to this act of usurpation would appear to have been the harem of that licentious King, for Asmodeus was of a most amatory disposition, being, indeed, the brother of Cupid, and by no means imperial in his tastes. However, King Solomon, acquiring knowledge which gave him power over the

genii, recovered his throne, and bound the impostor in fetters. It is also said that Solomon compelled Asmodeus to assist in building the Temple, by cutting the stones into the requisite forms without iron or noise, by means of a sharp stone implement called Schamir, whose edge was as hard as that of a diamond.

Raguel and his family were among those who were left by their Assyrian escort to settle in Ecbatana, the capital city of the Medes, about six days journey from Nineveh. There, after awhile, by means of some precious stones which he had secretly brought with him from Samaria, he commenced the commercial pursuit which he had followed there—that of buying cattle and sheep in the pastoral districts, and selling them in the city.

Now some might declare that Ecbatana was not built at this time, because Herodotus relates that Deioces built that city after the Medes had obtained their independence of Nineveh. But it is affirmed in the sacred writings of the Hebrews that Ecbatana was an existing city in the days of Shalmanezzer, and that Raguel and his family were carried captive there by the Assyrians. We may suppose that Deioces built Ecbatana in the same sense that Nebuchadnezzar claimed to have built Babylon, namely, by having extended, fortified, and beautified it. To Deioces may, perhaps, be attributed the royal palace, with its beams of silver, and of cedar plated with gold. Also he may have surrounded it with those seven wonderful walls, which Herodotus describes as being circle within circle, each inner one rising higher by the height of the battlements; the battlements of the first circle being painted white, the second black, the third purple, the fourth blue, the fifth bright red, and, which appears quite incredible, the sixth plated with silver, and the seventh with gold. In the construction of these walls and the palace, Deioces may have been said to have built Ecbatana, although those erections are ascribed in the Book of Judith to Arphaxad, called by Herodotus—Phraortes, son of Deioces. Be this as it may, it is recorded by a more ancient writer than Herodotus that Raguel settled in Ecbatana.

Asmodeus, wandering about the earth to admire the beauty of the daughters of men, in this city saw, and became enamoured of, the beauty of Sara. Again we must remind the reader that the maturity of womanly beauty in eastern lands is so early attained that a girl of twelve possessed the ripening charms of an English young lady of eighteen. The early wisdom of the child gave dignity to her physical perfections, and her purity of heart added a divinity of loveliness which demons admire and envy; but which they seek to destroy, because it is a barrier set up against themselves.

Edna, the wife of Raguel, was one day returning from the market-place, where she had been making some purchases, and had placed her light burden on the ground for a moment, to rest, when Asmodeus, in the guise of a handsome young merchant of her own nation, approached her with the usual salutation, and requesting to be allowed to carry her burden, would not be refused. This gained him admission into the house of Raguel, where he soon found favour in the eyes of Edna, and ultimately became a frequent and welcome visitor.

The handsome youth called himself Nathan, and professed to be the son of a deceased Hebrew, who had brought with him from the land of Naphtali a considerable fortune in concealed jewels, which the son had greatly increased in his pursuits as a merchant. So handsome, so wealthy, and so agreeable in manners, Edna was delighted to perceive that the young stranger was an admirer of her daughter, and began already in secret to covet him for her son-in-law. Therefore it may be supposed that she took every opportunity of indulging the youth in his desired opportunities of presenting himself before the beautiful maiden.

And so do many foolish mothers, in their mischievous endeavours to secure admirers for their daughters, introduce them to the society and evil influences of human devils, the chief pursuit of whose lives is to deface God's beauty, and corrupt God's innocence, in the persons of His fairest creatures; and thus are they a foul blight among the Roses of the Garden of the Lord. Nemesis frowns upon the folly of the mother, leaves her to the bitterness of disappointment and humiliation, and with swift wings overtakes the seducer; but who shall restore the beauty and innocence of the corrupted roses of God's Garden?

Often, when the rich young merchant was conversing with Sara, would the mother make some excuse for retiring and leaving them together, that the admirer might not lack opportunity of prosecuting his love-suit. Meantime Sara, so far from being captivated by the manners and wealth of the polite visitor, conceived a decided antipathy to his presence; as though her pure yet simple nature discerned instinctively, and in spite of all falsely-decorous and virtuous disguise, the impurity of the soul with which she had been brought into contact. But apart from this intuitive discernment, she no sooner perceived that herself was the secret cause of the young merchant's polite visits, than she shut her heart against all his temptations, praying that she might be enabled to preserve her love pure and unwavering towards her cousin.

Raguel left his daughter entirely in her mother's charge; and whatever Edna willed concerning her, he generally approved. Thus, the stranger having her parents' welcome to their house, it was not in Sara's power to forbid him; nor dare she affront him by directly rejecting the magnificent presents which he frequently brought to her, in rich jewellery, and costly stuffs; but she would never touch those presents, nor by the slightest expression or glance encourage the advances of her lover.

With tears Sara repeatedly represented to her mother that the merchant's presence was hateful to her, and begged to be spared the pain of his society. But her mother would not heed her, declaring that it was impossible she should be able to judge for herself in such a matter.

‘But, dear mother, I know that I cannot love him.’

“Then, my daughter, you must learn to love him; and you have my commands to conceal from him completely your present foolish aversion to his society. Surely you cannot be in your right mind

Is he not handsome? Is he not exceedingly rich? Is he not most polite and agreeable in manners? As to loving him, you know nothing of the matter; how can you? If he will marry you, it will be a happy day for you; and you can learn to love him afterwards at your leisure. Do you suppose, my foolish daughter, that the childish and silly sentiment of love, or no love, should be your impediment to a position which will be almost as exalted as that of a Princess?"

"O, my dear mother, do not utter such cruel words to me. Would you have me united to a man that I cannot love?"

"I tell you, my daughter, that your ideas are quite childish on this subject, as it is natural they should be at your age; and that you will learn to love him after he has married you, as other wives do."

"But, dear mother, I love my cousin Tobias, and he will claim me."

"Urge not this reason to me again, Sara. He has not formally claimed you; and it is well that he has not, to wed you by our law to his father's poverty. I trust you will be married to this rich suitor before your cousin has opportunity to claim you, should he be so foolish as to wish to do so. I command you not to mention your cousin again, as your lover. It is but a childish day-long fancy, both on your part and on his."

Her mother's purpose appeared so horrible to the young maiden, that she retired, weeping bitterly, and prayed now, not only that she might be able to preserve her own heart for her cousin, according to her promise to him, but also that she might be preserved from the cruel coercion of her parents in this matter.

Now although Sara was already marriageable, and Asmodeus, as the merchant Nathan, knew that he could readily gain her parents' consent to become their son-in-law, yet he knew, also, that this preference could not avail him so long as he could not also gain the consent of their daughter, however frequent it was in those days to disregard that consideration in a marriage contract. For it appears that there is a divine insuperable law for the protection of mortals from the schemes of evil spirits, whereby, unless the heart yield consent, no spirit, however subtle, shall be able to prevail against them. Nor could Asmodeus even touch the hand of Sara without her own mental consent, although embodied in the substantial form of man. Thus, without her own knowledge of the fact, the virtuous will of the maiden became her sure protection, since, without her own consent, her lover could not by any possibility have touched her person, however violent his own desire to do so. But, had the maiden's heart yielded only for one moment, then might Asmodeus have approached her, increased her enthrallment by his enchantments, and ultimately have possessed her.

Therefore were all his wiles constantly employed to reach the citadel of her heart. He plied her daily with temptations; the temptation of his own devoted love to beget love; the temptation of glittering prospects of the happiness of riches; the temptation of graceful winning manners and a handsome person; and all aided by the parental approbation of his suit.

Edna would often dwell upon the perfect propriety, politeness, and

even reverence, of the suitor's behaviour towards her daughter, as an additional reason why she should confide in the correctness of his love, and respond to it; little supposing that all this was necessarily so, because, and only because, of the unbending virtue of her daughter's heart, which kept the suitor at arm's length. And it was this holy mystic barrier which the foolish mother was daily striving to break down!

And not only does this divine law operate against the impure desires of genii and devils, but men also of corrupt practices are awed and repelled by the dignity of virtue. Therefore when a woman is subjected to the boldness and freedoms of the impure, let her look into her own heart and past conduct with alarm, and strengthen the fortification of her heart by virtue's impregnable will.

CHAPTER XIII.

TOBIAS STARTS ON HIS JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.—WHERE IS HEAVEN?
—THE ANGEL RAPHAEL BECOMES THE GUARDIAN OF TOBIAS, AND
PROTECTS HIM FROM GREAT PERILS DESIGNED BY THE JEALOUSY
OF ASMODEUS.—THE GENIE'S ANGUISH.—WHERE IS HELL?



FOR two years the genie Asmodeus had continued his fruitless courtship of the fair Hebrew maiden with increasing love. During all this time Raguel had not heard of the advancement of his cousin Tobit in Nineveh; nor had the Purveyor heard tidings of the settlers in Ecbatana; his journey into Media having been postponed, and mere enquiries failing to lead to any knowledge of the whereabouts of Raguel. Tobias had passed through the course of studies which his father had designed for him, and was now on his journey towards the Holy Land under the protection of the King's Surveyor of Tribute and his escort, whose duties led him to Jerusalem and the intervening provinces.

Anna had blamed her husband unceasingly for sending her son on what she considered a very perilous journey; while the Purveyor only prayed the more earnestly to his God to protect their dear son, and resigned him with confidence to divine care. And needed was the prayer, for great was the peril; although neither Anna nor her husband could possibly have suspected its nature.

Just about this time Asmodeus discovered that he had a successful rival in the love of the beautiful Hebrew girl. Her fidelity, at the same time that it rendered his success more hopeless, added intensity to his admiration and love, as proving the great worth of such a prize when once obtained. Proportionately furious was his jealousy; and he determined at once to seek and destroy his rival. By mystic means he soon learned in what part of the world to find Tobias; and professing at the house of Raguel that pressing affairs required an immediate journey which would occupy him some weeks, he took his leave.

While this was passing, Tobit was praying, as usual, that his son might be protected from all dangers and temptations, and restored to his parents in due time in safety and purity of heart. And it is recorded in the sacred writings that Tobit's prayers were heard before the Majesty of the Great God.

Where is the awful Majesty of the Great God revealed? Where is His Throne; where is Heaven? Surely the most pardonable of all

human-invented faiths was that which the patriarch Abraham first professed in Ur of the Chaldees. It is not surprising that men, in the absence of better knowledge, should look towards the glorious Sun as Heaven and the seat of the Majesty of the Great God, it being the most glorious object within the ken of man. It is the revealer of nature; and all that is beautiful reality would, without its light, be blank desolation. Through its influence the earth is fruitful and streams flow. Its warmth makes all nature pregnant. Its shine inspires the songs of the woods and groves. It revives and rejoices the heart of man. In a word the whole earth lives by the influence of the Sun's broad smile, as by the beneficent favour of an all-embracing God. It is not therefore unreasonable that primitive man should have regarded the Sun as the special habitation of God when it is the evident and most glorious source of divine beneficence.

But who shall count the suns of God's universe, where Solar Systems abound in even countless clusters? When knowledge was more limited, the human mind ascribed to Heaven a locality, however indefinite. But we find that incomprehensible Space is crowded with God's "many mansions," and the locality of His throne and Presence is absorbed into infinity. Astral systems are the mere provinces, solar clusters the counties, and worlds the villages of His Empire.

But where is Heaven? where is the royal capital of this tremendous dominion? Which of the spheres is the palace of the Divine Majesty where the prayers of His creatures reach His ear?

God Himself is Heaven in His omnipresent occupation of the Whole. The Vast Whole is His palace, filled with His omnipresence. As He fills the whole with His equal ever-presence, so the whole may be said to be His House; and thus "In My Father's House are many mansions." And we may regard the suns as the particular mansions whence His physical laws govern the surrounding spheres. From the sun are shot forth radiant forces which are as the arms of God stretched out to hold in their respective orbits the weightless spheres of its system; and to give them their motion therein, and their axial revolutions; by impinging upon the escarped sides of their mountain ranges. When the effects of cosmic electricity, and of the impinging force of light, are better understood, then will the sun's mechanical government of its weightless planets and their satellites be also better understood. It is not true that the mountains and mountain ranges of the earth's surface make it to resemble the uneven surface of an orange. The mountain ranges, generally, present to the setting sun steep slopes, which, however small they may appear in comparison to the whole globe, are, nevertheless, vast surfaces presented to the impinging force of the sun's rays; giving axial motion to a globe utterly weightless in space, whatever its comparative size; a globe as inevitably subject to the action of that actual force as the soap-bubble is subject to the influence of the gentlest breath of a child. And while this is so in regard to the escarpments presented to the west, the eastern slopes generally trail off in such a gradual manner as to present no counteracting vane to the rays darting from the rising sun.

It is further recorded that Raphael, one of the chiefs of the spiritual guards of our solar system, received the command of God to respond to the prayers of the pious Hebrew. The Will of God is the motive power of blest spirits ; He operates in their volition ; and their every action may be said to be the result of His command, since they are only the fulfilment of His will. All good men and women feel the spiritual presence of these celestial guardians. Prayer ever begets more and more faith in prayer, by the recognition of the consequent attendance of a celestial presence or influence. This celestial guardianship is so assured and felt, as to belong rather to Experience than to Faith, although the physical senses take no part in the evidence. In the instance before us, however, and once again in this history, the angel of God assumed substantial and visible form. The sun being the camp of our celestial soldiery, the angel Raphael winged thence his swift journey to the earth to control the jealous rage of the genie Asmodeus.

What language can reveal the glorious appearance of our fair planet as beheld in its broad circumference by a clear-visioned spirit of light approaching it from the sun?—a broad circumference of living purple sprinkled with glittering silver, and of glowing emerald and turquoise, with brilliant prismatic gems flashing at either pole and on the summits of the mountains. Nearer still, and already plunged in the liquid turquoise atmosphere, the celestial messenger beholds the hues becoming softly varied and more numerous, as the dead gold of the sandy plains, the shaded red of the ferruginous mountains, and the delicate grey of the calcareous ranges with their purple shadows, reveal themselves among the preponderant green of the continents ; while the purple ocean becomes mottled with deep green and blue, all sprinkled still with glittering flecks of silver light ; and floating masses, like ærial islands of pure silver wool, sail over the scene—even the storm clouds being all lined with silver on that side—on which spiritual beings recline as upon a downy bed, and contemplate without fatigue the splendour of the never-hidden sun above, and the beauties of the earth below, including the marvellous results of adaptive and constructive human genius.

The angel alighted in Mesopotamia, near the fertile banks of the river Chebar. It was the hour of noon, and beneath the shade of the trees which fringed the river, the group of travellers, which included young Tobias, were resting, while their horses and dromedaries browsed upon the rich herbage. Raphael now assumed the visible form of a young Levite mounted upon a mule, and travelling towards Samaria as one of the religious teachers of the new settlers there, by authority of a royal passport. For prior to the re-peopling of the cities of Samaria with the immigrants from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath and Sepharvaim, the land had been overrun with numerous lions, which had since committed great havoc among the strangers. So great was the terror occasioned by these unusual ravages that the visitation was attributed to the anger of the God of the exiled people ; and the governor of the province had sent to the King of Assyria to request that some of the priests of Israel might be permitted to return

to them, to teach them how to conciliate the God of the land, and avert His anger. The passports carried by these instructors commended the bearers to the protection and aid of the King's officers wherever they might be met between Nineveh and Samaria; and thus the supposed Levite, claiming to proceed under the escort of the Surveyor of Tribute, became the travelling companion of Tobias.

That same afternoon, while these travellers were pursuing their journey along the banks of the Chebar towards the city of Carchemish, they perceived, following them, two travellers—one on a fleet Arabian mare, and the other upon a dromedary which carried also heavy bales of goods. The officer commanded his party to halt until these had overtaken them, when the horseman, hastening forward with a hawk upon his wrist, saluted the commander, and stated that he was a merchant travelling by royal licence to Damascus. Presenting a purse of gold, he requested permission to join the party, that he might have the advantage of their society and protection during the journey. The commander readily granted this request, and they proceeded on their way.

The rider of the fleet Arabian mare was no other than Asmodeus. The dromedary, with its bales of merchandise, gave excuse for his joining the armed party for protection, that he might find opportunity to gratify the rage of his jealousy by destroying his rival Tobias. Concealing the cruel purpose of his heart, and assuming the manner of a merry and pleasant companion, it was not long before he endeavoured to accomplish his purpose. For, loitering to the rear of the party, without expression of anger or hostility, and unperceived by any but the supposed Levite, he directed an invisible bolt of hot sun-beams, as a fatal sun-stroke, at the head of the unsuspecting object of his hatred. Now although Asmodeus stood immediately revealed to the angel on his first appearance in the plain, Raphael remained undiscovered to the genie, having the power to disguise himself impenetrably from the detection of all inferior spirits. Therefore the genie was amazed that the sun-bolt, unerringly aimed by the hand of a god, should have missed its mark. For Raphael carried an invisible ægis, against which neither the bolts of Jove, nor the darts of Apollo, could prevail; and had turned aside the hot blast undetected by the genie, and Tobias remained unharmed, and all unconscious of his danger and deliverance. Asmodeus knew from this circumstance that the young Hebrew was under the protection of a power superior to his own, and the discovery troubled him. Still no appearance of disappointment was allowed expression in his countenance, and he continued the jovial companion of the travellers, awaiting further opportunity for the accomplishment of his purpose.

The country through which they were travelling was one of the most beautiful and fertile plains in Mesopotamia. The land was covered with many-coloured flowers and sweet-smelling herbs; the air was filled with the buzzing of bees and the songs of birds; while abundance of gazelles, hares, bustards, jerboas and other creatures, led a life of luxuriance in the meadows. The pretended merchant amused the party during the march with his hawking, and secured

abundance of game as a contribution to the evening repast, to which the King's officer added by transfixing with an arrow a young gazelle.

As soon as the western sky began to exhibit the glorious tints of the evening, the party halted, and pitched their tents, being yet half a day's journey from the city of Carchemish. While the servants and soldiers were preparing for the night, and until the evening repast should be ready, the young merchant suggested that they should employ the pleasant evening hour in hunting the gazelle; and a mounted party, armed with bows and arrows, was immediately formed, consisting of the officer, the merchant, the Levite, and Tobias.

The officer and Tobias had each slain his gazelle, when the merchant, being the rear-most of the party, pretended to shoot at a large bustard; but so directed his arrow that it should pierce Tobias under the left shoulder. Now, although the face of Raphael was averted from Asmodeus, he was aware of the murderous purpose, and caused the missile to swerve from its mark. Again Tobias, unconscious of his danger and deliverance, received no hurt, and joined the others in pronouncing the merchant a clumsy archer in having missed the bustard.

This second failure but increased the hidden rage and jealousy of the genie. He had now confirmed evidence that Tobias was protected by a divine armour, which could repel both his sun-bolts and his arrows. He therefore determined that same evening to make experiment of another kind of death. Meantime his manner towards the object of his mortal hate was that of a courteous, frank, and jovial companion. They were all drinking wine together in the tent of the officer, after the conclusion of the evening meal, when Asmodeus conveyed into the cup of Tobias by invisible means a most deadly poison. But again the Levite, to whom all the secrets of the disguised enemy were revealed, rendered the poison perfectly inactive, and the youth emptied his cup unharmed, again unconscious of danger or deliverance. Still more astonished than before, but with manner still unchanged, Asmodeus, in secret fear, examined the countenances of his fellow travellers with the scrutiny of a god; but his eyes were blinded for the present, and the protecting angel remained undiscovered.

That night, when all had retired to rest, except those who watched the tents and cattle, the genie Asmodeus, leaving his assumed form reposing on the bank of the Chebar, hastened with the bitter ardour of an enslaved, but unaccepted lover, to the chamber of the daughter of Raguel, in Ecbatana. Evil spirits may gaze on the virtuous and holy whom they dare not touch. The fair maiden had been weeping at the prolonged absence of any tidings of her dear cousin; at the cruel siege of her heart in the meantime; and at her mother's mercenary, and to Sara's mind, revolting ideas of marriage. She had appealed to God as her only hope and protection, and had fallen asleep with the renewed resolve that no authority should compel her to submit her body and soul to dishonour in the acceptance of any other husband than him whom she loved, and who had solemnly promised to claim her. This virtuous resolve of faithful love had left

upon her beautiful countenance an additional charm, more powerful than definable. Asmodeus gazed upon her with adoration, but without hope and with intense jealousy. He would have snatched her from her couch, and carried her to a lone paradise beyond the reach of mankind, but had no more power to coerce virtue than he had to destroy the harmony of the universe: the same inexorable law protects the one and the other. He could but gaze, meditate, and suffer.

We have already asked "Where is Heaven?" and now we ask "Where is Hell?" With the truly happy, Heaven is everywhere, within and without. The happy heart feels its blessedness shining forth, and reflecting back from every object: the hours of the day and night move on with joyous progress: the sun, the moon, and the most distant stars are all aglow with joy: the earth, whether in city or country, is clothed with joyousness: the running streams leap and sing with joy, and the air is filled with a happy enchantment. But with the unblest soul all this is reversed. Hell is a perpetual sense of misery, and that ever painful sensibility alone is Hell.

Thus Asmodeus, while roaming through the beautiful and joyous plains of Mesopotamia, existed in Hell and Hell in him. Its flames were the raging flames of unalleviable jealousy. At present he was permitted to feed his unholy love by the contemplation of the object of his desire; his love fed the flames of his jealousy; his jealousy was his unquenchable Hell; and his Hell was the divine punishment of the misdeeds of an unblest spirit.

CHAPTER XIV.

ASMODEUS BECOMES THE EVIL COMPANION OF TOBIAS, AND LEADS HIM INTO TEMPTATION AT CARCHEMISH, WHILE ASSUMING THE CHARACTER OF A DISCREET GUIDE.—THE GENIE'S NARRATIVE OF AN AMOROUS ADVENTURE IN THAT CITY.



THE next morning the travellers resumed their journey, Asmodeus accompanying them with his falcon, as gay and pleasant as ever. Yesterday his external manner towards Tobias had been most courteous and friendly; to-day it was still more cordial, and he appeared to compete with the Levite in his claims to the confidence and friendship of the son of the chief Purveyor. Asmodeus had now relinquished all hope of destroying his rival while purity of heart obtained for him divine protection, and sought only how he might ensnare him, by leading him into such wickedness that he might become forsaken of God.

When they arrived at Carchemish the travellers all repaired to one of the great Khans, where the principal merchants resided during their stay in the city. By this time Asmodeus had made his society agreeable to the son of the Purveyor, and, after they had dined, they went forth together to view the principal sights of the ancient city, to which the merchant claimed to be a fit guide from his previous residence in Carchemish. So correct had been the converse and manners of the disguised genie, that the most fastidious could have raised no objection to his companionship; therefore Tobias felt that he was in no way disregarding his father's injunction to avoid lewd company, when he submitted himself on this occasion to the guidance of his fellow traveller. But his confidence in the fellowship he had accepted was still more established when Asmodeus cautioned him, during their walk, to beware of the temptations of the women of Carchemish. "For," said he, "although you are a prudent youth, the ladies of this city have ensnaring eyes and manners. And I speak not like those theoretic preceptors who raise their voices in deprecation of evils which they do not understand, and into which they would be the first to fall, if they were, themselves, placed in the way of temptation; but I speak as one who, having previously resided in this city, became acquainted, practically, with its snares, by my own entanglement in them."

Thus cunningly spoke Asmodeus to one whose destruction he sought ; and he continued :

“I was one morning walking through that pleasant part of the market-place where fruits and flowers are exposed for sale, when my attention was arrested by a display of lilies of unusual perfection. While I stood admiring them a lady approached, attended by a female slave. She stood about two paces from me, and I heard her exclaim in low, but very pleasant tones, ‘What lovely lilies!’ Then, addressing her slave, she said, ‘Zania, enquire the price, and let me have a large group of them.’ The slave, taking me for the proprietor of the flowers, or professing to do so, approached me, and enquired the price of a large bouquet. At that moment her mistress was lifting her veil, and disclosed to my astonished gaze such dazzling beauty, that I forgot the question of her slave, and stood like one infatuated by a charm. The lady only smiled with cruel satisfaction at the effect she had produced, while the slave repeated, ‘I have asked you, Sir, the price of a large group of the lilies, pray do not keep my mistress standing in the market-place.’ Then, comprehending the mistake of the slave, and in a moment of youthful folly wishing to take advantage of it to shew my politeness to the lady, I said, addressing the mistress, ‘I pray you, Madam, to pardon my rudeness one moment longer,’ and entering the shop, I placed in the hand of the proprietor a piece of silver, requesting him to furnish me with the freshest and finest group of the lilies. With this I immediately returned, and approaching the lady with a low reverence, begged she would allow me to present her with the flowers. Then, professing to have discovered the mistake of her slave, she apologized in a most impressive manner, and declared that her slave deserved severe chastisement for having mistaken a noble for a vendor of flowers ; but she would receive the lilies as a token that I had taken no offence at the affront which her admiration of them had caused me.

“Like an indiscreet youth, I replied that I was but too greatly honoured by the opportunity, which her slave had given me, of doing service to so charming a lady ; and that, so far from deserving punishment, I begged she might be allowed to receive a present, which at the same time I made to her, of a piece of gold. The lady now fixed upon me a look which thrilled me to the very soul with passionate admiration, and, bending her fair neck to me, she dropped her veil, and passed on, followed by her attendant. While she continued in sight I could not resist the temptation to gaze after her fascinating figure, whose every movement appeared to me to be the perfection of gracefulness. When she had gone completely out of view I re-entered the shop, and purchased another bunch of the lilies ; not so much that I wished for the flowers, as that I might ask some questions respecting the object of my admiration. Here I learned that her name was Korissa, that she was considered one of the fairest and richest ladies of Carchemish, and was the occupant of the large house with the avenue of myrtles, which stood adjacent to, and south of, the great Temple of the Sun.

“Now I am quite aware, my young friend, that had I been

possessed of ordinary prudence, I should at least have allowed my civility to the strange lady to have included, and to have ended, all my concern about her; nay, I should even have committed that act of polite folly through her slave, and have kept my eyes as much as possible from the mistress. But I was so infatuated, as soon as I had committed the first act of folly, that I had no power to undo the charm of the beauty which I had allowed my eyes to linger upon. Reason was unthroned by passion, and instead of exerting my will to restore the legitimate ruler of our actions, I yielded complete dominion to the usurper.

"I retired to my Khan in a state of mind which was quite new to me. It was a state of deep dejection, yet I cherished it as though it had been a new joy that I had discovered. It was a pain which I found a pleasure in enduring. Such is the folly and punishment of loose love. Because the sight of the lilies increased my disorder, I loved to gaze upon them; and could take no other refreshment than the inhalation of their perfume. My greatest desire now was to strengthen my chains by beholding again the fair enslaver; and in the afternoon I determined to view the house of the myrtles, that I might at least contemplate the walls which enclosed her; and, changing my dress for one more costly than that which I had worn in the morning, I went forth."

The speaker paused and stood still. They had now reached that same great market-place of Carchemish, and the disguised genie pointed out to his companion that they now stood in the very spot where he had first beheld the fair Korissa. They were standing in the midst of an arcade paved with stones of various colours, arranged in pleasing devices, and kept constantly cool by the sprinkling of water. The hot glare of the sun was subdued by a light blue canvas which covered the whole avenue. A sparkling fountain played at each end of the promenade, and produced a soft music very pleasant to hear on a hot eastern summer day. The air was scented with the mingled perfume of the fruits and flowers which were exposed for sale. Many of the fairest and noblest of the city were passing to and fro, followed by their slaves, who carried supplies of fruits for their evening feasts, and selections of flowers for the decoration of their tables.

"This," continued Asmodeus, "is the very shop where the rare lilies were exposed which gave me introduction to the fair Korissa." And while the travellers lingered before the shop more than one attractive lady took occasion to stop and admire the flowers which were exhibited there, lifting their veils as if for clearer inspection, with action of hand and arm of studied gracefulness, thus seeking to be admired while pretending only to admire the flowers, and as though unconscious of the presence of strange men.

Asmodeus, for awhile, anxiously watched the effect of these unveilings upon the attention of his young companion; and had Tobias allowed his eye to be allured after any of the fair tempters, he would have led him artfully in her track. But, at present, Tobias appeared more interested in the suspended narrative than in the attractions of the loungers in the flower arcade, and intimated that he was impatient

to hear the conclusion of the adventure ; when they resumed their walk, and Asmodeus thus continued :

“When I left the Khan in the afternoon, my way to the house of the myrtles led me again through this part of the market, and I called at the shop of the flower-merchant, to see if it were possible to select a still finer bouquet than that which I had hastily purchased for the lady in the morning ; for in the rashness of my love I felt a presentiment that I was not only about to contemplate the exterior of the house of my enslaver, but also the interior of its halls, and also its mistress ; and I desired to carry to her an offering as an excuse for approaching her, should an opportunity present itself. When I approached the shop imagine my surprise and delight to find there the slave whom her mistress had addressed as Zania. As soon as I appeared, the flower-merchant and the slave ceased their conversation, and from the manner of both I judged that they had been talking of myself. Such however was the hope which my love suggested, and it was immediately confirmed, for Zania, beckoning me aside, thus whispered : ‘Sir, if the meeting of this morning has left in your mind any admiration of my beautiful mistress, you may count yourself the happiest of mankind, for her last smile was bestowed upon you ; and, I fear, from her manner since she left this arcade, that none but yourself will be able to restore her accustomed gaiety. She has done nothing since but gaze fondly and sadly upon her lilies. I am but now come, without her knowledge, to purchase the most tempting fruits that the market supplies, that I may induce her to eat ; but I much fear that my pains will be lost.’

“At these words I was almost beside myself with joy, and exclaimed, ‘O, my fair friend, I, equally with you, am the slave of your mistress. I pray you, if you think my boldness will not offend her, that you will allow me to accompany you, to offer at her feet a present of flowers more worthy of her acceptance ; for so confused was I in the presence of her dazzling beauty this morning, that I fear I did not bestow sufficient care in the selection of the group. I am come, but now, to seek to repair my fault, by obtaining such a group that she may be assured how greatly I value the honour of being allowed to gratify her wishes.’

“At this speech the slave smiled, and gave me the desired permission to accompany her with the offering of flowers. Delighted at this opportunity of throwing myself at the feet of the lady, of whom I had become so madly enamoured, I bestowed upon Zania another piece of gold. I then requested the vendor of flowers to select for me a bouquet of the very rarest that his shop contained, with the finest of the lilies predominant, for which I fully satisfied him ; and, furnished with this excuse for my visit to the lady, I accompanied Zania.

“When we reached the house, I found the avenue of myrtles was an avenue of perfume surpassing the sweetness of roses, for the trees were covered with blossom. The door being open, we entered a magnificent hall, where Zania bade me seat myself until she had announced my presence to her mistress. Here also the air was filled with the perfume of the love-plant, for myrtles, in flower, were growing

in beautiful vases in every convenient spot. Myrtles surrounded the marble basin of a fountain in the middle of the hall; the windows were screened with them; they bloomed at each end of the sofas; the air was all scented with their sweet perfume. It was a bower of myrtles, and to me a bower of Love, joyously impressed as I was with the reciprocal sentiments of Korissa, as communicated by her slave. It was, rather, the emblem and anti-chamber of the bower of Love.

"I had scarcely time to look around the hall, when Zania returned to me, and announced that her mistress was most impatient for my introduction. Lifting aside a rich curtain of crimson silk, she ushered me into the saloon, where the object of my adoration reclined upon an elevated sofa, on cushions of gold brocade. As soon as the slave had introduced me, she withdrew, while I made my obeisance by prostrating myself to the earth before the beautiful Korissa. She immediately approached me, and desiring me to rise, took me by the hand and led me to her seat.

"'O, beautiful lady,' I exclaimed, 'I cannot sufficiently express to you my thanks for this welcome to your house, which I feared my boldness had caused me too rashly to enter. Fearful that I might have been remiss in the hurried selection of the flowers, which you did me the honour to receive from me this morning, I again encountered your slave while, myself, seeking a more perfect group, with which I have presumed to accompany her. I pray you to transfer all blame from my boldness to the charm of your beauty, which has drawn me without power of resistance to throw myself at your feet as your eternal slave.'

"'Sir,' she replied, as I presented to her the flowers, 'I pray you to accept my thanks for the courtesy of your welcome visit, and for these beautiful flowers. I trust you will now stay while my maidens give us a short entertainment of music.'

"To this, you may judge, I readily assented. At the command of Korissa a table, which stood in front of the couch, was soon laden with fruits and sweetmeats, from which I was supplied from time to time by her own fair hand; while six beautiful damsels with tabor, tabret, psaltery, harp, cymbals and lute ranged themselves at the foot of the dais and performed a delightful concert. Meantime, had the conquest of my heart and reason not been already accomplished, it must have been completed by the tender glances, which the lady, from time to time, cast upon me, as she pressed me to taste the choicest of the fruits. When the fair musicians had ceased their playing, Korissa herself took a lute, and after a brief prelude accompanied its tones with a very sweet voice. I remember that her song commenced thus:

'Let sages whose hearts are too old and too cold
For Love's sweet enchantment, deride it and chide it.'

The several couplets which followed, the words of which I have forgotten, said in the same strain, 'Let those whose eyes are too weak to endure the sun, complain of the brightness of day; let those who are senseless to beauty, condemn as folly that which they cannot

enjoy. But shall those who love the glories of summer mope in darkness? Shall they condemn the gushing joys of youth who are young and happy?' Then casting upon me a tender look of love, she concluded her song with a couplet which implied that those whom love had drawn together, and who could find joy only in each other's society, should never be separated.

"Having yielded, thus far, to the fascinations of this beautiful woman, you may judge that I was in no disposition to take alarm at these ensnaring words. I drank the sweet poison with much enjoyment, and in the fervour of my youthful passion took up the lute, which she had laid aside, and replied to her in similar strains of folly.

"So rapidly did the hours pass while we were thus employed at music, and in intervals of conversation, that it seemed but presently, when the shades of evening began to dim the apartment, and Korissa invited me to adjourn to another saloon, where the evening repast was awaiting us. Had not all my admiration been so engrossed by my beautiful hostess, I should have been astonished at the magnificence which burst upon my view as I entered with her into the festive hall. Although I had been informed that she was one of the richest ladies in Carchemish, I was not prepared for the display of so much wealth.

"Clusters of perfumed lamps, pending from the lofty roof, formed a very brilliant and beautiful design upon an azure ground, and shed a light more agreeable than the light of day. The walls were covered with rich tapestries of cloth of gold, woven with glowing silken flowers, alternated with silken fabrics of delicate grounds, woven with designs in gold and silver. We sat down at a table overlaid with ivory, and edged with solid masses of the same substance elaborately carved, on which was set forth a service of solid gold, in the most costly fashion of Nineveh. While we feasted, attended by two young slaves, the musicians performed so softly as not to prevent conversation. After we had eaten, we were served with the most delicious wines, and again Korissa sang enrapturing songs of love, accompanied by the lute."

CHAPTER XV.

ASMODEUS AND TOBIAS ENTER A PUBLIC HALL OF MUSIC, AND ARE THERE JOINED BY ANOTHER GENIE AND TWO FAIRIES, DISGUISED AS MORTALS.—TOBIAS IS SUBJECTED TO AN EXCEEDINGLY SUBTLE TEMPTATION OF ENCHANTMENT, FROM WHICH RAPHAEL DELIVERS HIM.



WHEN Asmodeus had proceeded thus far in his narrative, he and Tobias had reached a large building of very noble architecture, surrounded by a park and pleasure grounds of very great extent. Chariots were constantly arriving from every direction, and depositing visitors of both sexes at the grand entrance, the ladies in all cases being closely veiled. Tobias, when he had for a moment observed the grand building and its surroundings, and noted the quality of the many visitors, and the magnificence of their equipages, enquired of his companion if he was right in supposing this to be the palace of the Viceroy, who was giving an entertainment to the nobles and principal inhabitants of the city. Asmodeus replied that, if he wished it, they would join the stream of visitors, if possible enter the building, and learn what he wished to discover. While saying this he began to ascend the steps, and Tobias followed.

In the vestibule sat an old man, richly arrayed, at a large table which was piled with gold. And the heap was increased each moment by the addition of a piece from every visitor who passed in. Asmodeus, conforming to the example, placed upon the table two pieces, and, bowing to the old man, the two travellers passed onward, with the stream, into a hall of vast extent and of the utmost grandeur. Its light was dazzling compared to the light of the outer darkening evening; and proceeded from a concentration of thousands of lamps in the lofty dome. A large oval space, slightly elevated, on one side of the hall, paved with slabs of alabaster, was left perfectly clear, and was surrounded by musicians, who held their various instruments in readiness to commence their performances. The remainder of the floor of the hall was occupied by long tables, laden with fruits, sweetmeats, and wines; and flanked by sofas for the reception of the visitors. As the company streamed in they occupied the sofas, and at one of them our two travellers took their seats. Asmodeus now remarked to his companion that he perceived they had entered one of the great halls of public festivity and music; and that it was well

they had done so, as it would give his young companion an opportunity of witnessing some of the manners and luxury of the people of Carchemish.

"I have heard my father say," responded Tobias, "that such places are snares to youth, and promoters of vice among the people."

In order that Asmodeus might maintain his assumed character of moralist, it was necessary that he should express views somewhat in accordance with it, and he replied :

"Your father has said truly, my young friend ; for, as so many of the idle, the profligate, and the licentious, of both sexes, collect at such centres of pleasure, they become infectious to weak virtue, by the contact of their society, and by their example. Still it is possible for those whose virtuous principles are established, to enjoy harmlessly the amusements which are provided in such a house as this, if those amusements are contrived without any tendency to vice in themselves ; for he who is established in virtue has only to recognise vice to at once hate and avoid it."

While Asmodeus was speaking, an elderly man of noble appearance approached the same table, with two ladies, and took possession of a sofa immediately opposite our two travellers. As soon as the old man and Asmodeus caught each other's glance a cordial recognition was passed between them. Asmodeus then introduced his young companion as a fellow traveller, passing through the city to Jerusalem ; and, soon after, informed Tobias in a whisper that his elderly friend was one of the wealthiest merchants of Carchemish, with whom he had often, in times past, had extensive transactions, and whose acquaintance might be cultivated with advantage, as he was a man of great wisdom, as well as probity and wealth ; that the elder of the ladies was his wife, and the younger his daughter ; that their virtue was greater even than their beauty, and that he might, therefore, be under no reserve in enjoying the privilege of their society. The ladies had already unveiled, and their modest demeanour justified the assertion of Asmodeus. Unlike the ladies whom they had met promenading the flower market, their eyes were ever averted from the gaze of strangers, and their glances lingered only on the beauties of the hall.

The sofas were now nearly all occupied : the silken curtains were closed over the great inner entrance ; and the musicians commenced a most delightful performance, in such accurate time, that it was difficult to realise that so many instruments were in play. When the first performance was concluded, the musicians paused for a few minutes ; then, striking up a fresh measure, some curtains at the side of the hall were drawn, and a train of dancers of both sexes skipped into the centre of the dais. These dancers were not only the most accomplished of their profession, but were selected for the great beauty of their persons. The young men were so attired that the symmetry of their forms, and the gracefulness of their postures and evolutions were set off to the best advantage ; and the charming figures of the females were insufficiently concealed by the white cloud of fine fabric in which they were attired. Tobias felt abashed at

the sight, and the fair girl who sat near him convinced him of her modest sentiments by the blushing manner in which she withdrew her eyes from the lively performance.

When the dancers had retired, and while the musicians rested, the dais was occupied by a troop of mimics and buffoons, who were very skilful in producing laughter. These were followed by singers, who enraptured their audience with the finest vocal performances which could be heard in Carchemish, accompanied very softly by some of the musical instruments.

During all this time the visitors feasted and drank wine, each table gathering a party as isolated and convivial as if they had met at the house of a mutual friend. But when two or three hours had been spent thus, the dais was left clear, and the greater part of the company arose from their seats. Some promenaded the hall; some ascended the dais and arranged themselves in pairs for dancing; others retired through the various outlets into the beautiful gardens. Among the latter were our travellers and their three companions. The night being dark favoured the brilliancy of the thousands of lamps with which these delightful grounds were lit up. All who have ever witnessed a beautiful garden illuminated at night by artificial means will remember the enchanting effect. How, objects being but partially revealed, curiosity is excited in the half obscured, and in the depths of mystic avenues. How, the range of vision being limited, the mind is constantly incited to explore; and how each new glimmer in the distance becomes a beacon of renewed attraction. The merchant of Carchemish, his wife, and Asmodeus, formed one group; Tobias and the daughter formed another, and followed them. Wherever the lights were most numerous there was some special attraction to be enjoyed. Beautiful flowers and shrubs were abundant: large basins of marble and porphyry were the repositories of the most beautiful kinds of fish. There were many pleasant arbors, always so situated as to command some striking prospect, revealed by an extra arrangement of lamps. Directing their steps towards a spot whence arose into the air an unusual blaze of light, they reached a large pavilion whose dome was supported on numerous lofty pillars of porphyry. The edifice was reached by wide flights of steps, from each side of which fell a small cascade of bright water, supplied from a fountain which played in the centre of the interior. The spaces between the pillars were entirely filled up with a fine gilded trellis work; and an inner trellis, of the same description, encompassing the interior in a smaller circle, formed a spacious aviary all round the exterior of the pavilion, broken only by trellis arches which formed the four entrances. In this was contained an assemblage of birds the most choice, either for richness of plumage, or sweetness of song. Here also were placed seats, and tables piled with viands, and delicious wines, for those who chose to partake of them. After admiring the captives of the trellis, whose glorious plumage flashed like living gems here and there, and listening awhile to their unceasing concert, with its accompaniment of soft music from the fountain and cascades, our visitors descended from the other side of the pavilion, and continued their walk through the grounds.

The remarks of Tobias to his fair companion had been hitherto principally concerning the style of the gardens of Nineveh, especially the King's gardens. She appeared an attentive listener, but took little part in the conversation herself, which was in accordance with her modest demeanour. What few remarks fell from her were calculated to impress Tobias with a high opinion of her judgment; especially when she condemned the dancing performance in the great hall, and expressed her preference for the natural and artistic beauties of the garden; and even spoke of the singing of the birds, and the soft music of the fountains, as more agreeable to her than the performances of the great band, and the clever singers whom they had heard. However lost upon Tobias may have been the mere personal attractions of the merchant's daughter, he began to feel an admiration for her on account of her modesty, and the simplicity of her tastes; and his earlier indifference to her society gave way to a feeling of agreeable companionship. In like manner the maiden gradually became more communicative and unreserved, and at length described to Tobias the house and gardens of her father on the banks of the Euphrates. She mentioned many things to be seen there which were calculated to arouse the interest and curiosity of her companion. She also took occasion to condemn the idolatrous worship of the people of Carchemish, and intimated that the only God which was worshipped at the house of her father was the great Unknown God, whose supremacy had been preached by the prophet Jonah, in the reign of King Pul. Tobias then entered into a warm advocacy of that worship; shewing the folly of the worship of idols, and its consequence in the degradation of the especially favoured people of the great God of whom Jonah had preached. To all this his fair companion listened with apparent eagerness and approbation, and expressed her great desire to be instructed more fully in the true worship, and her regrets that there were no teachers of this exalted religion at Carchemish.

Tobias was still in the midst of an earnest exposition of the nature of the religion of his fathers; he had forgotten to admire the beauties of the garden in the all-absorbing interest of his subject—an interest intensified by the close attention of the listener; he had much yet to say, and his fair hearer was still eager to catch his words. It was very difficult to break off the subject and finally part just then. They were approaching a gate which led from the fenced-grounds to the banks of the river, where a porter stood to prevent entrance, but to open to those who wished to leave the grounds by that outlet. Asmodeus now halted, and, addressing Tobias, said:

“My friend has a boat waiting here to convey him and his family hence, and has invited us to return with them to his house, which is situate a little lower down on the margin of the river, and whence we may rejoin our friends at the Khan in the morning. I have represented to him that you may be anxious not to leave your friends at the Khan in uncertainty about you, but he has offered to despatch a servant as soon as we reach his house, with any message you may wish to deliver, in case you decide to accept his invitation, and we

may rejoin our companions at any hour we wish in the morning. I leave it to you to decide whether we may spend the time as profitably at the house of my friend, as at the noisy Khan. Shall we proceed, or shall we return?"

Tobias had been interrupted in the midst of a discourse which he was unwilling to break off so suddenly, and his fair pupil was looking at him in evident anxiety for his reply. The messenger of the merchant of Carchemish would allay any anxiety which his escort and his friend the Levite might feel on his account. He might view the rarities of the garden and house on the Euphrates, and finish his discourse on the religion of the Hebrews, to the advantage of the daughter of the merchant. He decided to accept the hospitality of his new acquaintance for the night, and embarked in the boat.

It is now time to inform the reader that the son of Tobit was not in the hands of one genie only, namely Asmodeus, who sought his destruction by leading him cunningly into temptations, but the supposed merchant of Carchemish was also an inferior genie, subject to Asmodeus, and the two ladies were fairies, all engaged in the service of the jealous god, and bent on achieving the destruction of his rival.

By our knowledge of the daily events of human life we are assured that the minds of men are so far free to follow good and evil, and their consequences, that, when they deliberately yield to temptations, no miraculous intervention of Providence is manifested in their deliverance, and they are allowed to pursue their chosen courses even to their own destruction. But there is a Divine guardianship ever at hand for those who seek it, and for those who are traitorously beset by spirits of evil, whereby the innocent are delivered. And when Asmodeus so completely simulated the character of a man of prudence, Tobias yielded none of his virtuous will in consenting to view with him the great city of Carchemish. The tempter had led him where beautiful women lurked for strangers, and, in describing the facility with which their houses might be entered, he secretly assailed the heart of the youth with temptation; while, in assuming the tone of a monitor, he sought to reserve his influence for deeper schemes should his first insinuations fail. When he found that the glances of Tobias did not stray after the wantons of the flower arcade, he sought to lead him more effectually into a snare by placing him in contact with a tempter who should at once unguard him by the assumption of a modest, prudent, and virtuous bearing. In the same way that many weak women are ensnared and fall when the tempter is a fellow worshipper at the same temple, and takes advantage of the confidence yielded to seeming sanctity of life. In pursuance of the present plan, Asmodeus trusted to the pretended daughter of the merchant to work a progressive influence in the mind of Tobias, and ultimately undermine his fidelity to the daughter of Raguel.

Had the events of the evening at Carchemish obliterated from the memory of Tobias the image of his beautiful cousin Sara? No. He had thought repeatedly during his walks in the delightful gardens how he could have enjoyed the time had his cousin been there to share the pleasure. But he had not asked himself what his cousin would

think of his walks there in company and converse with a strange maiden ; especially whether she would be likely to approve of the position he had assumed of instructor to this fair creature. Had he asked himself these questions, and applied the case by supposing Sara had become the companion and tutor of some fascinating youth, he would at once have seen cause for painful jealousy or distrust, and, in justice to her, have severed himself from his new friend, and returned to his Khan, with the conviction that he had already wronged the girl to whom he had so solemnly promised the resistance of all temptations of that character. Thus, although his conduct had been morally free from blame, he had unconsciously done a wrong to his cousin, and stepped into a great danger when he consented to enter the boat, and seated himself therein, beside the beautiful daughter of the merchant.

In a few minutes the vigorous rowers had brought the boat to a landing place where a flight of steps led up from the river into a garden, partially and pleasingly revealed by the light of the risen moon. The party landed, and, as they sauntered towards the house, Tobias wondered that the proprietor of a retreat so delightful should seek elsewhere for entertainment. This place appeared to him more enchanting than the gardens of the public music-hall. Perhaps the calm of the natural evening, in such a place, was more suited to his taste. Perhaps, on the contrary, he was more enchanted because the whole scene was the creation of enchantment. Then with a feeling of true loyalty to his cousin, his heart exclaimed :

“If my dear cousin were at my side how truly delightful would it be to discover together the beauties of this place !”

At that instant a bright flash seemed to dissolve the whole scene ; the earth trembled ; and Tobias sank down insensible to all that had called forth this feeling of regretful pleasure. Thus often, in what is called the mutability of human affairs, do the scenes in which we move, and the objects which we pursue, and are just ready to grasp, dissolve before us, and we blame as misfortune that which we cannot understand to be the destruction of a mere mischievous illusion or tendency.

When Tobias came to himself he found he was alone in the midst of perfect stillness, excepting the voice of the nightingale and the distant murmur of the waters of the Euphrates. The moon still shone brightly, but instead of the beautiful garden, and house in its midst, it revealed only an uncultivated wilderness. He thought he must have awoke from a dream ; but, if so, could not account for his waking in that solitary place. He remembered having reached the enchanted garden from the river, and turned back towards the sound of the flowing waters, to seek the boat which had carried him from the gardens of the hall of music. But when he reached the river side he could discover no boat nor landing place.

“Surely,” thought he “whatever I may think of the reality of my late companions, and the garden, and the house, this itself can be no reality, but the sudden change of an unsubstantial dream. I must wait with patience until I wake to some reality ; either of my father’s

house at Nineveh, the journey along the banks of the Chebar, or the Khan at Carchemish." With this resolve he sat himself down on the bank of the Euphrates, to await the solution of the mystery.

Now this sudden interruption of the plans of Asmodeus had been accomplished by the angel Raphael. It is permitted to spirits of evil to tempt mankind, and it is permitted mankind to resist or to yield to their temptation, the power of resistance being implanted in man, and the choice between good and evil left to his free-will. But when the subtlety of evil spirits is exerted beyond the powers of discernment of the human mind, justice and mercy step in to his aid. Thus the guardian of Tobias appeared upon the scene in time to frustrate the cunning purposes of Asmodeus; and by his superior power, for that time, dissolved the enchantment which gave corporeal existence to the genii and the fairies. They became invisible and fled. At the same moment the garden and house, which were the work of their enchantment, were dissolved; and the wilderness, in which they had been temporarily created, assumed its natural aspect. Had the will of Tobias yielded guiltily to his temptors, his protecting angel might have wept at his voluntary fall, but could not have prevented his destruction.

The eye of man being limited to the comprehension of the physical, how amazed would he stand at a glimpse of the spiritual world—that world within world, in which he moves, and which influences his actions unseen. Why is he not permitted to see the subtle agencies which canvass his bias, since they influence his destiny? Yet he would not be wiser for the sight when the opposing influences would remain the same, and his free-will be still the arbiter. As it is, he feels, and weighs, and chooses between, these unseen influences; and should his eyes be opened, like those of the servant of Elisha, to behold the hosts which are at hand to protect the just, so would he also perceive the opposing forces of evil, with all the allurements and promises of present gain or pleasure.

CHAPTER XVI.

ASMODEUS RETURNS TO ECBATANA, AND RELATES A WILY ACCOUNT OF HIS ADVENTURES.



Asmodeus described, in a previous chapter, the hell of jealousy that raged in the bosom of Asmodeus, when foiled in his attempts to destroy his rival on the flowery plains of the Chebar; and how he returned to Ecbatana, to feed the flames of his love and jealousy by the contemplation of the beauty of the daughter of Raguel. We have seen him again defeated, and hotter than ever was the self-contained hell which tormented him; not only of hopeless jealousy, but of unavengable hatred. He had encountered, face to face, on the bank of the Euphrates, the potent angel of God; and heard his irresistible command, to desist in future from the temptation of Tobias, or to expect the penalty of chains, which should bind him for ever. For many days he roamed through the great cities of the earth, tempting, in various guises, the assailable among the beautiful daughters of men; but could never conquer his predominant love for the virtuous Hebrew maiden. At length, attracted by that love, and resolved on new efforts to possess its object, he returned to Ecbatana one evening, and again presented himself at the house of Raguel, in his wonted guise of the young merchant Nathan. Then he stated that, having journeyed as far as Carchemish, he had found tidings awaiting him which rendered unnecessary the further prosecution of his errand; and that, delighted at the opportunity to return sooner than he had expected to those from whom he had been so reluctantly forced by pressing calls of business, he had used the utmost despatch in returning to Ecbatana. While Asmodeus spoke thus, he glanced at Sara to imply that she had been the attraction; and Edna also gave her daughter an expressive look, which conveyed her proud sense of the confirmation of her repeated speeches to the effect that the young merchant was so completely enamoured, that the warmth of his love alone ought to beget a suitable response; even were he not the rich suitor offering so many advantages in his proffered alliance. But it was apparent on the ingenuous countenance of Sara, that her heart remained unmoved by this fresh instance of her lover's ardent devotedness; and not only did she hear his declaration without sign of reciprocal emotion of love or friendship, but even without the smile of that natural pride

with which women witness the power of their charms, even over admirers to whose love they are indifferent ; and she made it plainly visible that the expressions of devotion of the young merchant were even distasteful to her.

Asmodeus read all this with sadness, though scarcely with disappointment. Edna perceived it with restrained anger, and fearful of its effect upon the future patience of the wealthy lover, she requested her daughter to place before their visitor some refreshments of fruits and wines ; and while she was gone to fetch them observed to Asmodeus that her daughter had been very much depressed in spirits during his absence, and although she had within the last hour wonderfully improved, her natural vivacity had not yet entirely returned to her : and, besides that, his long absence, and, perhaps, some other feelings, had tended to increase her bashfulness in his presence at this first interview after his return. *Lame deception !* Even Asmodeus could but secretly despise the false, and falsely prudential, motives which made the mother his ally in the siege of her daughter's heart. Yet, however despicable in the sight even of devils, as well as of angels, is the naked form of cunning avarice, Asmodeus in this instance highly valued its aid ; and to confirm Edna in her opinion of his great wealth and liberality, intimated that he had brought with him from Carchemish and Nineveh, some presents of stuffs and jewellery, which he had selected expressly with the view to request her acceptance of them, as well as others for her daughter, which he would beg to be allowed to present to them in the morning.

When Sara had placed upon the table a variety of fruits, sweet-meats, cakes, and some wine, she resumed her seat, and Edna requested their visitor to entertain them with an account of some of the incidents of his journey. Such narratives have ever a peculiar charm to the lively imaginations of the people of the east ; but neither Edna nor her daughter were at all prepared for the especial personal interest which they ultimately discovered in the incidents of this relation. We will pass over the traveller's false account of adventures encountered before his arrival at the Chebar, on whose banks, in fact, he but commenced the journey in human character :

"On the tenth day," he continued, "after I had entered the flowery plains through which flows the river Chebar, and while I was enjoying the amusement of hawking, I discovered before me a party of travellers escorted by soldiers in the livery of the King of Assyria. Hoping to obtain in their society, not only pleasant fellowship, but also security from the bands of Arab plunderers who often attack travelling merchants in those parts, I hastened forward, and offering a present to the commander, was admitted into their party. Here I found most agreeable company, for not only was the commander a most lively companion, and passionately fond of hawking and hunting, but there were two other travellers of our own people ; one a Levite, who, like myself, had just joined them, and was proceeding to Samaria ; the other a young Naphtalian from Nineveh, journeying to Jerusalem. I continued in this agreeable society until we reached the great city of Carchemish, where we lodged at the same Khan.

This city is situate on the other side of the Chebar, just at the confluence of that river with the Euphrates, and, consequently, its walls are protected on the east, west, and the south by the two rivers; while a great trade flows into it by those channels as well as by caravans from all parts of the world. Travellers entering the city for the first time find much to admire. Its gardens are scarcely excelled by those of Damascus; its interior is as well watered by means of canals and fountains as Nineveh itself. The banks of the two rivers, where not occupied by splendid wharves and public promenades, are dotted with the princely houses of the merchants, whose gardens reach down to the water edge. There are bazaars, where the most curious and costly products of the world are exhibited for sale, and a magnificent market-place. In the centre of the city rises the immense temple of the Sun, conspicuous above all its many magnificent structures. I stayed but one afternoon and evening in this city, which I spent in guiding my young Naphtalian friend to the sights which I have already alluded to, and which I had examined on former journeys. There is also a very large hall of entertainment exclusively for the reception of the wealthy, as admission is only obtainable by a piece of gold. We were passing its grand entrance in the evening, when my young companion expressed a curiosity to enter, and, although such places are too often snares for youth, I was unwilling to oppose his wishes, and we entered, and witnessed the performances of the most proficient dancers, singers, and mimics. I am glad to believe that my young friend escaped this place of temptation unharmed; for, although he attached himself during the evening to the company of a very charming young lady, who, with her parents, sat at the same table with us in the hall of music, yet I believe it was because his virtuous appreciation discovered her to be worthy of attention and conversation, and not one of the loose women who are more frequently to be met with in such places, especially at Carchemish. My young friend Tobias having accepted ——”

“Tobias!” exclaimed both Edna and Sara at once:

“Yes,” continued Asmodeus, appearing to share their surprise, “the name of my young travelling companion was Tobias, the son of Tobit, one of the captives brought to Nineveh by King Tiglath-pileser.”

“It is my cousin!” exclaimed Sara, covered with blushes, and with the confusion of pain and surprise.

“Then I have much pleasure in telling you,” continued Asmodeus, “that he appears to be a very worthy, reserved, and amiable youth; and that I left him in perfect health at Carchemish. Had not the business of my journey unexpectedly terminated at that city, we should probably have been fellow-travellers as far as Damascus. But, as I was about to observe, after we had spent some time in the beautiful grounds of the hall, which, it being night, were lit up by thousands of lamps, my young friend accepted an invitation to spend the night at the house of the young lady’s father, and I accompanied them from the grounds, which reach down to the Euphrates, in a boat which landed them in the garden of the merchant’s house, a little further down the river, on the opposite side. There I left my friend, and

was to have met him in the morning at the Khan ; but, before his arrival, finding I had no occasion to remain, I had already started on my way back to Ecbatana."

"Then you left our cousin Tobias in the society of the young lady whom he had met at the hall of music?" remarked Edna, glancing at her daughter.

"Yes," replied Asmodeus, "and I have no doubt that I left him in good and proper company ; for the merchant appeared to be one of the most wealthy and respectable jewellers of the city ; and his daughter appeared to me to be, in every way, a fit companion to the young Naphtalian. Yes, and let me distinctly impress upon you that my allusion to this meeting, and acquaintanceship, should not convey any censure upon the young man's conduct. So far from it, I could but approve of his admiration of the beautiful daughter of the jeweller, as she appeared to be as wise and modest as she was personally lovely, and yielded her society to him only out of appreciation of the same qualities in her admirer. I should also mention, that the intimacy arising from the meeting was the more natural, as the jeweller and his family were already proselytes to our religion, to the extent that it had been made known by the preaching of the prophet Jonah, in the days of King Pul ; and Tobias was worthily employed, during the walk in the grounds of the hall, in further instructing his fair pupil in the precepts of Moses and the prophets. In fact she appeared to be a lady altogether well worthy the attentions of your cousin. Nor, I judge, could his admiration possibly have been withheld from one so beautiful, wise, and modest, when he had once enjoyed her conversation."

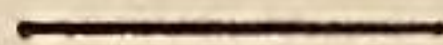
While Asmodeus was speaking, the blushes and confusion which the name of Tobias had brought to the countenance of Sara gradually gave way to pallid anxiety. As he concluded these remarks about the jeweller's daughter, the light faded from her eyes, and she sank back in a swoon. Her mother arose, quickly, and raised her in her arms. Asmodeus himself would have sustained the lovely burden, but he dared not touch her while her will gave no consent ; therefore, with the assistance of a maid, she was carried to her chamber. Then Asmodeus took his leave, with pretended grief and surprise at the sudden sickness of the daughter of Raguel, but inwardly rejoicing at the success of his scheme to arouse in her bosom distrust of her cousin's fidelity.

The affectionate care of Edna soon restored her daughter to consciousness ; but she continued so feeble that she was unable that evening to rise from the couch where she had been laid. Edna understood the workings of her daughter's mind ; and although affectionately anxious for her health, hoped that the communication, which had caused this sudden sickness, would render easier the early accomplishment of her own plan for the disposal of Sara to the wealthy and patient suitor.

"Do not let it disturb you, my dear child," said Edna, "that your cousin, who only met you and woo'd you as a child, unconscious of the nature of love, should forget you when he enters the paths of

manhood, and meets with others more suited to his maturer tastes. Have I not all along represented to you that it was a vain expectation which caused you to oppose my wishes for your real welfare? When your cousin begins his travels, you perceive, now, that he does not hasten to seek you and claim you, as you expected; but he journeys in a contrary direction, towards distant Jerusalem, whence he will probably never return. And, even on the way, he appears to have devoted his love to a strange lady, casually met at a hall of music; from which you may at least conclude that he has entirely forgotten his childish promises to you. Learn, my dear child, to think of these matters calmly and without distress. But, at present, while the subject is painful to you, banish it altogether from your mind, and do not mar your beauty with tears and sorrow."

Edna then affectionately kissed her daughter, and held her, sobbing, to her bosom. In time her sobs gave place to sighs, and her sighs to a profound sleep; when her mother, gently placing her head upon the pillow without awaking her, observed that her countenance had become beautifully placid, and left the chamber. Sara was already dreaming a delightful vision of comfort.



CHAPTER XVII.

SARA IN A DREAM FOLLOWS TOBIAS TO DAMASCUS, AND IS COMFORTED BY THE ANGEL RAPHAEL.—RAGUEL'S OBSERVATIONS ON LOVE.—ASMODEUS AGAIN URGES HIS SUIT WITH SARA, AND IS PUT TO FLIGHT BY AN INCANTATION.



WHILE Tobias, after the dissolution of the enchantments of Asmodeus, was sitting on the bank of the Euphrates, astonished at his position, and awaiting the termination of a dream, he heard the approaching sound of oars, and, presently, perceived a boat, in which he recognised his friend Raphael, the Levite, sitting at the helm, while a boatman rowed. As the boat passed near him he called to his friend, who immediately steered for the shore, and took him aboard. The Levite explained that he had just concluded some business which he had to transact on the bank of the river, and was returning to the Khan. When Tobias gave an account of his mysterious adventure, the only comment which his fellow-traveller ventured, was, that he had evidently fallen into an enchantment, which had been dissolved in time to save him from some danger; and that he should return thanks to Heaven for so signal an interposition in his favour, and be more strictly guarded in future, when tempted to yield himself to the confidence of strangers. They reached the Khan together, and, on the morrow, resumed their journey with the Assyrian officer, towards Palmyra. We now return to Sara and her vision of comfort.

Most dreamers have sometimes experienced in their sleep the sensation of flying through space by a mere effort of volition. Each time that they have enjoyed afresh the delightful illusion, it has been accompanied by the conviction that they have now re-discovered that it had been always in their power thus to traverse the air, had they but exercised the will, and the effort, to do so; and they avail themselves of the renewed discovery to transfer themselves from place to place, with the ease and speed of thought. So dreamt Sara on this sorrowful night. She thought in her sleep that she enjoyed this power of traversing the air by mere volition; and, attracted by her love to her cousin, she immediately sped after him, with an intuitive perception of the route of his journey. Without fatigue, and with a feeling of enchantment, she flew over the plains of Mesopotamia, across the Euphrates, and over the desert, without alighting at the wealthy city of Palmyra, right on to the pleasant vale of Damascus.

There she descended into a garden, adjoining a great Khan, where the travelling merchants were accommodated. Damascus was celebrated for its beautiful gardens, and this garden was celebrated in Damascus. The soul of Sara was happy ; therefore it was a paradise. She knew that she was approaching her cousin ; and there he sat, alone, beside a fountain whose sprays fell into a marble basin, and, lit by the moonbeams, were like unfailing showers of pearls. She approached him, and sat by his side unseen. Looking into his countenance, she read the serene beauty of purity of life, warmed with the chaste tenderness of purity of love. She heard him murmur her own name, and pray God to bless her and protect her, and in due time permit him to find her again, unshaken in the constancy of her love. While she gazed and listened, conscious of her own invisibility, Tobias leaned his head upon the edge of the marble basin, and fell asleep where he sat. Then Sara, looking about, perceived that her cousin was attended by a radiant angel of God, who, approaching her, said : " Maiden, be comforted. Thy prayers have reached the presence of God, and He has ordained thee joy and the fulfilment of thy desires, after sorrowful patience. He has beheld thy virtuous resistance of the unholy love of a fallen spirit, the genie Asmodeus, in the false guise of Nathan, and has defended thy cousin from the malicious snares of that demon's jealousy. To-morrow, when thy suitor again presents himself in the form of the young merchant, pronounce the words—'The Holy One is the shield of the innocent ; the seducer and the liar are His abomination,' and he will fly from thee abashed. If he ever come again to tempt thee, these words shall be to him as the thrust of a sharp spear."

At this revelation Sara gave a start of surprise and fear, and found herself waking in her chamber at Ecbatana. When she was fully awake she remembered that she had dreamt ; and, recalling every circumstance of the dream it gave her comfort. She was astonished and alarmed at the thought that her suitor could possibly be other than the young merchant Nathan, whom Asmodeus had personated. Yet the dream had so much the appearance of a divine revelation, that she received it as such, and rejoiced in the assurance that both herself and her cousin were in the special care of Heaven. She was no longer pained at the recollection of the insinuations against the fidelity of her cousin's love ; believing now that she had been courted by a demon, she judged that the narrative of the adventure at Carchemish was the lie of the seducer, referred to in the words of the charm which was to cause him to fly.

While Sara thus awoke and meditated on her couch at Ecbatana, Tobias awoke in the garden of the Khan at Damascus. When he opened his eyes he found the Levite beside him with his hand upon Tobias's shoulder. "My friend," said Tobias, "you have interrupted a most delightful dream. I have been to-day sad and troubled about my dear cousin, of whom I have before spoken to you. I came into the garden alone to indulge the melancholy of my heart, and fell asleep thinking of her ; in fact I seem hardly to have slept at all ; for, rather, a vision stole upon me. My cousin sat beside me radiant and

hopeful like her sweet self, but improved in beauty since I last saw her; and gazed upon me with the tenderest expression of love and constancy. I would have embraced her, but was held down to my seat by a languor which prevented me from moving a limb towards her, or even taking her hand in mine. A great light suddenly shone upon us, and an angel of God approached her, and conversed with her, promising the joyful fulfilment of all her desires after the patient endurance of much sorrow. The angel was still conversing with her when you awoke me, and dissipated the delightful vision. But tell me, dear Raphael, should I not derive comfort from this happy dream, and receive it as a revelation from Heaven, in response to my prayers, that my cousin still lives in constancy of love to me, and that I shall yet meet with her to our mutual joy?"

"You are certainly entitled so to interpret this dream," replied the Levite, "and may confide in the promise, as made direct by an angel of God. Let it inspire you with courage to resist all the temptations that beset heedless youth; and especially to believe that God will ultimately reward virtue with true happiness; although that virtue may, and must be, tried and proved before the reward is due." Tobias then entered the Khan with his friend, and on the morrow resumed the journey towards Samaria.

On the morning of that same morrow, Sara came down from her chamber completely restored to health, and radiant with the joy and hope occasioned by her dream. Her mother received her with affectionate congratulations, interpreting the improvement in her daughter's spirits to the conquest of her love for her faithless cousin Tobias, and her willingness to receive at length the addresses of the princely Nathan.

"I am rejoiced, my dear daughter," said Edna, kissing her, "that you have wisely overcome the sorrow which it was, perhaps, natural that you should at first feel, when you learned, so unexpectedly, that he, on whom you had lavished a love so constant, had forgotten his vows to you. If to love truly and constantly is a virtue, so is it equally a virtue to courageously overcome that love when it has been found to have been misapplied, and to bestow it on some more worthy object. I have related to your father the circumstances of Nathan's meeting with your cousin at Carchemish, and he wishes to speak with you this morning, before Nathan arrives to enquire after your health, which he will be sure to do early, as he left us last night in great concern at your sudden illness. Now let me implore you, my dear child, to listen with respect and proper consideration to whatever remarks your father may address to you, and shew your dutifulness by a proper and ready submission to his wishes."

Sara made no other response at present to these remarks than to return the affectionate caresses of her mother, and accompany her to the breakfast room, where her father Raguel awaited her.

"Bless you, my daughter," said her father, arising and kissing her; "your mother has informed me of the pain with which you received some tidings last evening from our friend Nathan. I am rejoiced to find, by your appearance this morning, that you have dismissed that

trouble. Remember that the temporary sorrow of misplaced, or unreciprocated, love is almost the inevitable experience of early youth. The fancies and dreams of childhood are seldom realized in after life; but it is generally by the wise and beneficent interference of Heaven that these fabrics, erected without judgment, are made to crumble, and give place to substantial and suitable facts. I love my kinsman Tobit, and his family; and remember as a time of sunshine and peace amid the clouds and storms of the early days of the captivity, the pleasant time we spent with him at his peaceful house beside the Tigris. But it would indeed have proved a time of the sowing of further sorrow to us, had you allowed the childish loves, which then sprang up between yourself and your cousin Tobias, to mar the peace and prosperity of your future life. It is true you must have become your cousin's wife, had he sought you and claimed you, as soon as you were marriageable; but as the time has passed by, and he has sent me no message, you may conclude that he has not cared to redeem you and your inheritance, and I am at liberty to bestow you upon another. Yet I now promise you, my dear child, that I will not exercise this right in opposition to your own inclinations. You are my only child, and the chief aim of my life now is your future happiness. Yet I would have you understand and know that your mother is wiser in her experience and years than you can possibly be, in the simplicity of your youth; and I wish you to yield your heart to her counsels; to let her think for you, judge for you, and decide for you. You have already shewn that your heart is subject to your will; let now your will be subject to your mother's superior wisdom."

Thus, and more to the same purpose, spoke Raguel; and Sara listened with due respect to his admonitions without expressing any opposition to his views; for she believed in the power of the words which the angel had communicated to her, to deliver herself from her suitor, and her parents from their illusion, before that day was spent. She might at once have intimated her conviction that this lover who had found so much favour with her mother, and was not unacceptable to her father, was no other than a licentious demon, but her words would have been received only as evidence that her obstinacy and sorrow had been succeeded by madness, instead of renewed health, and submission to the evidence of her cousin's disregard of her; and for the present she deemed it wiser to maintain silence, merely requesting her father to give her until the evening to ponder over his words. This answer, and the manner of it, were construed by Edna as evidence that her daughter was growing complaisant to the suit of Nathan, and she already inwardly gloried in the prospect of her daughter's proud advancement to be the wife of that rich merchant. Therefore when Asmodeus, or Nathan, called that morning to enquire after the health of Sara, Edna received him with a countenance which expressed not only her own satisfaction at the supposed change in her daughter, but beamed congratulations to the suitor. Asmodeus expressed his delight to hear of the recovery, and his regret that on the previous evening he had contributed to her indisposition by mentioning,

incautiously, some circumstances respecting her cousin which appeared to have caused her pain.

"It is well," replied Edna, "that you mentioned those circumstances; for I believe the knowledge will prove very beneficial to my daughter, and ultimately add to her peace, in enabling her to avow her true sentiments towards yourself. For I must now inform you that the Tobias with whom you travelled is the nearest cousin, and lawful claimant, of my daughter. She has never seen him but once, and then only for a short time during our stay on the bank of the Tigris, at the festival of the King's return to Nineveh. Yet she has always, being a very religious girl, felt that she should not receive the addresses of any suitor until she had satisfactory evidence that her cousin did not intend to claim her in marriage. Not that she could have given him her heart; for I am convinced that, in opposition to the virtuous reserve of her manners towards you, she has all along felt a natural inclination to you, and regretted that she could not conscientiously feel at liberty to accept your addresses. In this opinion I am confirmed by her manner this morning; for now that she is satisfied, from your disclosures of last evening, that her cousin has no intention of exercising his legal claim, she has assumed a new cheerfulness, and listened without objection to her father's advocacy of your suit. She has even promised to hold her decision open no longer than to-day, and when a girl begins to waver in favour of a present lover, even if her heart has been prepossessed by an absent one, the conquest is easy and sure."

This conversation began to revive the hopes of Asmodeus, and, knowing better than Edna the truth of her remark, that when the heart of a woman begins to waver in its virtue, or its constancy, it immediately becomes an easy prey to the tempter, he determined that day to exert all his devilish skill to win the fair prize which had so long baffled his arts to obtain.

A porter had accompanied Asmodeus, with a bale containing the rich presents which had been alluded to on the preceding evening. It was now conveyed into the house, and Asmodeus unfolded some costly rarities of female dress and ornament, far less tempting than which have often won the bodies and souls of vain women. Edna was astonished and delighted at the rich stuffs which were unfolded before her for her own acceptance, and lavish in her expressions of praise and gratitude. "And now," said Asmodeus, "I have some pieces which I crave the pleasure to present to your fair daughter." Edna herself went to fetch her daughter, and said to her:

"Sara, my dear child, Nathan waits below and wishes to be allowed to pay his respects to you. I hope you will receive him this morning with a more grateful recognition of his patient love and concern for you, than you have hitherto shewn; which will be merely an act of propriety towards so worthy a suitor, and of dutiful regard to your father's wishes. Nathan has brought you some presents worthy the acceptance of a great Princess, and I trust you will receive them in such a manner that he shall not go away rewarded with grief and disappointment, as hitherto, in return for his magnificent generosity."

Edna then ushered her daughter into the presence of Asmodeus, who congratulated her in a manner of most profound respect and pleasure, on her reappearance in such charming health. For the joy and hope inspired by her dream still brightened the countenance of the beautiful girl; and, more admirable than all the charms of her fine features, glorious hair, and graceful form, was that divine beauty of chastity and truth which ennobled the whole. Asmodeus was more enraptured than ever as he gazed upon her now, without the bitterness of despair as hitherto; for he believed that his chances of possessing all these rare charms were considerably greater, since he had adopted the devilish scheme of destroying, as he supposed, her confidence in her cousin's love.

"Emboldened by the deep devotion of my love, fair lady," said he, "I again dare to lay before you some trifling presents which I have carefully selected in the trust that you will not spurn them." He then unfolded some pieces of costly silks from China; some stuffs woven of the finest wool from Babylon; rare linens, both white and dyed, from the looms of Tyre; golden ornaments from Nineveh, and others from the populous capitals of India. "Truly," exclaimed Edna, glancing at her daughter, "these costly stuffs and magnificent jewels would fitly provide the bridal attire and adornments of some great Princess!"

While Sara was still looking upon these articles, without either gesture or word of gratitude, Edna continued, addressing Asmodeus, "Sir, my daughter is at present too much amazed at the magnificence of your presents to express fit acknowledgment of your bounty. She will presently find suitable utterance. Meantime I have some domestic duties to perform, which you must please allow to be my excuse for leaving you for a short time." Then Edna left her daughter alone with Asmodeus, hoping, as she had often vainly hoped before, that in her absence he would use such lover's opportunity of eloquence, as should overcome the reserve of her daughter, and induce her to yield to his suit. Nor was Asmodeus slow to avail himself once more of the opportunity provided. Again he avowed to her in most moving terms his unalterable love. Whether she crowned his life with happiness, or condemned him to eternal disappointment, his love would continue to burn. Would she teach him how to win her heart? He confessed himself unworthy of such transcendent charms; but what man could be found with greater claims? Truly his possessions were too insignificant to claim the consideration of one who was worthy only to share empire with some great Prince; yet she should conceive no wish that he had not the means to gratify. His wealth exceeded that of many Princes, and she should command it all. Her house should be a palace; her gardens a paradise; her attendants the retinue of a Princess; himself would be her eternal slave; or, rather, she should be his goddess whom he would adore for ever.

Had Asmodeus been addressing one of the frail ones, whose will had been even secretly influenced in his favour by these professions of eternal love, and dazzling riches, he would have thrown himself at her feet, embraced her knees, and arisen complete victor. But he felt that the impregnable barrier of virtuous will still opposed his approach

to Sara. While he spoke she still silently gazed at the rich presents, with which he had littered the apartment. Instead of exhibiting the uneasiness which was her wont when subject to his amorous addresses, she listened calmly, waiting for the return of her mother, fortified by the knowledge of the power which she held over her licentious lover, which gave her more courage in his presence, even now that she knew him to be a disguised genie, than when she regarded him merely as a man.

When Edna presently entered, she glanced from one to the other, anxious to read at once in their countenances the issue of the interview. Sara maintained an expression of calm triumph, slightly flushed with the exciting expectation of the event which she contemplated. Asmodeus looked again as dejected as ever.

"Sara," said Edna "have you remembered the injunctions of your father?"

"My dear mother," replied Sara "both you and my father wish for my happiness. There is one, however, who seeks my degradation, by striving to ensnare me into an impure love. *But the Holy One is the shield of the innocent; the seducer and the liar are His abomination.*"

The words were scarcely finished, when Edna shrieked with terror, for the house shook violently; for a moment an oppressive darkness filled the apartment, and there was a sound as of a rushing wind. When the light was restored Asmodeus had disappeared.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRAVELLERS ARRIVE AT SAMARIA.—ON NISROCH, THE JUPITER OF THE ASSYRIANS.—A DISCOURSE ON THE ORIGIN OF MAN.



THE scene of the present chapter is Samaria, where Tobias and his companions had arrived after several days travel from Damascus, through the classic land of Israel. Here the party, as the friends of the Assyrian Surveyor, were entertained at the house of the Governor of the city, who was the King of Assyria's Lord Lieutenant of the Samaritan colonies. This Governor was an Assyrian Prince of considerable learning, and of a liberal mind. He was a devout worshipper of God under the title of Nisroch, after the manner of his people. As the all-seeing King of Heaven this Assyrian Jupiter was sometimes represented in allegory as a King with the head of the keen-eyed eagle; and the sun and the moon were his lieutenants in ruling the day and night. As the strong King of the earth, he was represented with the powerful limbs of a colossal bull, and the crowned head of an ideal God. As the terrible King, the body of the bull was substituted by that of the lion. The Greeks afterwards refined the ideal of the chief of the Gods by representing the most majestic human form which they could conceive, attended by the eagle. The Assyrians represented greatness by magnitude of proportions; the Greeks by majesty of expression. But all these forms were regarded by the learned of Assyria merely as symbols of the attributes of the Great Supreme, under whose special favour and protection they believed they had obtained the supremacy among nations. Still, they entertained the belief that there were many Gods, controlling the affairs of the various nations under the imperial supremacy of Nisroch; even as there were many human kings ruling the nations as tributaries of the Great King, the King of Assyria. Thus, when lions ravaged the cities and villages of Samaria with unusual daring, and in unusual numbers, it was supposed that the God of the land, offended at the neglect of his peculiar worship, had sent this scourge among the people in his anger, by permission of Nisroch; although, as one of the inferior deities, he had been unable to defend his ancient worshippers from the superior power of that God, whom the Assyrians worshipped. Such, in outline, were the religious views of the Governor of Samaria. That the new inhabitants might propitiate the local Deity, the Governor had sent to the King a petition praying for native priests who should found a school of Hebrew theology. In compliance with this petition the King of

Assyria had sent learned Hebrew instructors, who had now for two years conducted a college at Bethel; during which time the theology of the Hebrews had been extensively made known among the new inhabitants of the cities of Samaria, who had come from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim. But the result is said to have been that they added the worship of the God of Israel to the worship of their former Gods, and still, according to their various nationalities, served Succoth-benoth, Nergal, Ashima, Nibhaz, Tartak, Adrammelech, and Anammelech. It is as difficult to comprehend such an inconsistent worship, as to reconcile the verbal contradiction, or the mysterious grammar, of our translation of the passages of the sacred history which allude to these events, where it is written, "Then the King of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let *them* go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land." "So they *feared* the Lord, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. They *feared* the Lord, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence. Unto this day they do after the former manners: they *fear not* the Lord, neither do they after *their* statutes, or after *their* ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the Lord commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel;" etc. "So these nations *feared* the Lord, and served their graven images," etc.

The Governor of Samaria, although not adopting the Jewish ritual, was an interested student of the Hebrew history and theology; and any of the learned Jews, who happened to visit Samaria from the neighbouring city of Jerusalem, were ever welcome guests at his palace. So likewise were philosophers of all faiths and of all lands; and at the time of which we are writing there were staying there a Sage from India, and a priest of the Jewish Temple. The Hindu was on his return from Jerusalem, where he had already spent much time in obtaining from the scribes a knowledge of the sacred writings. On the day of the arrival of our travellers these men sat at the Governor's table, with Tobias, the Levite, and the Surveyor of Tribute. And now we warn the reader that instead of a description of the usual evening entertainment of an eastern prince, in which dancers and singers amuse, and bright amorous eyes fascinate, we are about to listen to a dry theological dialogue. Therefore, if the reader has no patience for such discourse, let him pass this chapter, and plunge into the future scenes of imprisonment, and escape; of exile, travels, and battles; of poverty, lamentations, and death; of true love's trials, and true love's joyful triumph.

It was the practice of the Governor, when such were his guests, to lead the conversation into channels of theology and philosophy; and the subject which he had started on the present occasion was the First State of Man, which he requested the Jewish priest to explain according to the revelations of the sacred books of Moses. The priest described the creation of the first man and woman, perfect

from the hands of God, with bodies adapted to eternal youth, and senses which should never grow weary of the unfailing delights of Paradise. "The only condition," said the priest, "which the Creator imposed upon our first parents, for the security of this immortality of happiness, was simple and complete obedience to His command, only one command, namely, that they should abstain from touching the fruit of a certain tree which grew in the midst of their garden. But, yielding to the temptation of the Evil One, they tasted this fruit in disobedience to God. Had it not been for this, their progeny would have been, like themselves, immortal Gods—the ever happy children of the Omnipotent, instead of the inheritors of degradation, pain, and death; the consequences of disobedience to God."

When the priest had finished his account of the first state of man, the Governor perceived that the countenance of the Hindu traveller had assumed an expression of perplexity, and he requested him to speak.

"Such," said the Hindu, "is the account which I have gathered from the learned scribes at Jerusalem. I was further informed," continued he, addressing the priest, "that your holy religion attributes to the soul of man the continuance of that immortality, which was lost to his corporeal existence by his act of disobedience in the Paradise of Eden. But I have not been able to learn that your sacred writings furnish any history of the previous existence of the immortal and indestructible soul of man."

"We have no other record," answered the priest, "than that the soul of man is the breath of God; and, therefore, partaking of the divine immortality of His existence."

"Then," said the Hindu, "that soul must have shared the perfection and happiness, as well as the immortality, of God; for I have been informed that you ascribe to the Supreme Being an existence from everlasting to everlasting; without beginning as without end; as perfectly holy and happy in the infinite past, as in the everlasting future."

"Such is our conception of the God of Israel," replied the priest.

"Such also is our conception of Brahm, the Supreme. Without beginning or end, unchangeable, infinite, invisible, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and ineffably happy, His omniscience including that foreknowledge which penetrates into eternity."

When the priest again remarked that the Hindu had given a perfect description, so far as human language and thought were capable, of the God of Israel, the Hindu replied that he had described, not the God of Israel only, but the God of the Universe; its Creator and Preserver; the Father of all, and the bestower of benefits and blessings upon all nations. The priest rejoined, "But Judah is His chosen people. Although omnipresent He dwells especially between the Cherubim in His holy Temple at Jerusalem. Not only is His countenance against all the nations of the Gentiles, because of their idolatries, but He has even abandoned the other tribes of Israel, and delivered them over to their enemies, and he is now emphatically the God of Judah."

"The Supreme Brahm of whom I speak," replied the Hindu, "is the God of all nations. He dwells in no shrine, but in infinite space. The righteous, according to their law and conscience, among all nations, are His chosen people. He inspires prophets in every age, and in every community, to dispel the darkness of ignorance, and rescue His creatures from the errors of their imaginations. He reveals Himself to every heart which craves Him in humility and truth. And now, my lord Governor, as I am travelling through the various countries of the earth in search of knowledge and truth, I must say, with reverence for the sacred writings of the great lawgiver Moses, that his account of the creation and fall of man is not complete; or, if complete, is not reconcileable with the perfect foreknowledge and beneficence of the holy and perfect Brahm."

At these bold words, horror and indignation were depicted on the countenance of the priest; but he remained silent. Tobias looked from the priest to his friend the Levite for a vindication of the completeness of the holy writings; but the countenance of the Levite was unmoved; and he also remained silent. Then the Governor of Samaria, whose reverence for the holy books of Moses was insufficient to mar his interest in this discussion, invited the Hindu Sage to explain why he considered the Hebrew history of the creation and fall of man incomplete, or else irreconcilable with the foreknowledge and beneficence of the holy and perfect Creator.

"My lord," said the Hindu, "we are agreed that the Creator is omnipotent in might and in wisdom, and therefore no adversary can thwart His plans: that His foreknowledge penetrates eternity, therefore He knows the immediate and most distant results of all His acts: that He is holy, beneficent and just, and therefore cannot Himself will and ordain the degradation and misery of the most noble of His own creatures. But, according to the Hebrew theory of man's origin, God quickened him with His own immortal and happy essence, and gave that divine essence a free agency, to continue immortal and happy, or to fall by disobedience; having all the while a foreknowledge that man would fall, and having also omnipotence to withhold that creation, or that commandment, which should result in the degradation and misery of the hitherto divine and happy essence, and subject it to the dominion of Evil. Is it impious, my lord, to suppose that with such foreknowledge, Omnipotence and Beneficence would have combined to avert the degradation and misery of a vast race, by preventing the fall, or withholding the creation of man? Let not my discourse appear irreverent;" continued he, glancing at the priest, "I seek among the writings of the early philosophers for such revelations as shall explain the consistency and justice of the acts of the holy and perfect Brahm, well knowing that even though I may fail to discover such revelations, yet it is no less true that He is just, even though all written records should, by that test, appear false."

The Governor was silent, and looked towards the priest for a reply, who, disdaining the discussion, merely said:

"My lord, it is not the custom of the servants of God to enter into controversy respecting the wisdom of His laws or His works. It

would ill become a priest of the Holy Temple to listen, even in argument, to the vain imaginations of the heathen."

"Then spoke Raphael and said, "My lord, the thoughts of man cannot be restrained; nor is it forbidden to exercise that reasoning power which God has imparted to him, as a means to distinguish between that which is incomplete, that which is false, and that which is true. The arguments of our friend are but a process of that reasoning power which was given to man as a ladder by which he might ascend step by step to glorious views of truth. The height to which he shall climb may to some less adventurous minds appear dizzy and dangerous, until they have cautiously followed the same steps, and realized the same reward of knowledge. It is man's right to ascend every step of the ladder of reason, whereon he can firmly place his foot; although it is true that some, adventurous beyond wisdom, slip and fall, and in falling are tossed about in the wild regions of mental darkness and scepticism. Such, however, is only the fate of weak, though headstrong, minds; who grow dizzy at the height of thought which they have rashly attained, and are unable to fix their gaze calmly at the vast prospects revealed. Our friend, who is travelling among the nations in search of wisdom and truth, objects to the supposition that the first state of the soul of man, as man, was a pure divine essence, because, if so, while his exposure to temptation in the Paradise of Eden could gain him, by obedience, no greater felicity than that which he previously enjoyed, as part of the breath and life of God, his disobedience might result in eternal degradation. And thus, while the chances would be all against him, there was no prospective compensation for the risk; and that his creation under such conditions would not be consistent with the beneficence, wisdom and power of his Creator. Such reasoning, upon such a theory, would appear just; and as the infallible justice and wisdom of God would be thereby impugned, because He would be subjecting pure and happy souls to temptations, which in His foreknowledge He knew they would yield to, it is better to suppose the Mosaic theory incomplete, than to doubt the infallible justice and wisdom of God."

"Do I hear a descendant of Levi, doubting the inspired writings of our great lawgiver," interrupted the priest with signs of amazement, "or setting them in opposition to the justice of God, who inspired them?"

"I am not," replied the Levite, "opposing the writings of the sacred historian to the justice of God, but am about to shew the error of the interpretation of those writings as to the previous condition of the soul of man; and to explain that what the interpretation would make to appear an act of injustice towards the human soul, was, in truth, an act of divine mercy." Then addressing his words more especially to the Hindu and to the Governor, he thus proceeded:

"From these words of Moses—'the Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,' it must not be supposed that the soul of man was imparted direct from the happy bosom of God into the human body prepared for it. The expression is but intended to imply that God having created the body of man, animated it with a spirit

and caused it to live. The holy books are completely silent as to the condition of the soul of man previous to its embodiment, and that view of it only can be true, which is fully reconcileable with the Creator's justice, wisdom, and foreknowledge; for He can do no wrong, nor commit any error. Whatever is recorded or implied, that is not consistent with His supreme wisdom, justice, might, and prescience, all guided in their operations by unfailing love, must be rejected, however revered its authority, rather than the perfection of God appear in question; for His perfection is the test by which the errors of such records shall be made indisputable."

The countenance of the Levite now appeared to shine with a spiritual light, and his vision to penetrate deeply into space unimpeded by material obstacles; and, stretching forth his hand, he said:

"There is buried in the earth a book, written by the hand of the Creator Himself. Its pages are as wide as continents; its language, being the language of God's truth, can never be perverted by the sophistries and prejudices of false interpreters and commentators. When man shall, in due time, have discovered this book, that reason, which God has given him for the attainment of truth, shall soon enable him to read its language; and although its teachings are as infinite as the wonders of God's terrestrial works, there shall not be found in all its pages one contradiction; for it is God's own record, which no scribe has mystified by error of transcription. But this book shall limit its teachings to the history of God's creation of this world and its inhabitants from distant ages of time. The history of the first condition of human souls ranges back into that eternity which preceded the creation of worlds. Nor is it possible for the intellect of man to comprehend that early history and origin, even though an angel of God were to endeavour to interpret it to his mind; for man's faculties are limited by the Creator to the comprehension only of such knowledge as is needful to his present earthly condition. As the physical vision is limited and cannot penetrate beyond a certain radius, so is the mental vision. As there is a limit to the eyes' discernment of objects, and the mind's comprehension of Space, so is there a restriction to man's understanding of matters beyond his need to know and understand. There are many truths which the human mind can neither realise nor refute; for they are placed beyond its grasp, because they are needless to the perfection of man's present state. Thus although it will be found to be within human comprehension to understand the love and justice of God in the creation of man, the farther-back history of the origin of Evil, before the creation of the world, is quite beyond that comprehension. Man shares in the consequences of that event, but its first cause, leading to the temporary division of the Empire of the Holy and Omnipotent is hidden from him during his earthly probation. When man, by the researches of reason, finds out causes, he still yearns to discover the cause of causes; which the human mind can never grasp. It is beyond the comprehension even of the highest of the angels to grasp the ultimate cause of causes.

"This much may be revealed and understood. At the time of the origin of Evil the immortal angels, or inferior gods, became divided in their allegiance, and many milliards revolted from the Almighty to join the banner of the Evil One, who thought to occupy the Throne of the Supreme. But the rebel angels and their chief were cast out from the abodes of the holy, and hurled into miserable darkness, far from that divine light of God's revealed presence, which alone had infused them with their previous joys. In course of time, or rather of eternity, the Son of God, who is the personation of His Father's love, was grieved at the prolonged miseries of these mislead immortal spirits; and, in the character of Mercy, pleaded with divine Justice for the restoration of such as should repent of their disobedience and crave to return to their allegiance. But the fallen spirits having sinned and become degraded from their original splendid state, could not be at once restored to the pure presence of the Majesty of God, and the society and privileges of their holy brethren who had never swerved from duty. Therefore God gave them to His Son to fit them by provisions which His love should invent, to return to the splendid estate from which they had fallen, when they had passed through certain existences of purification and trial of obedience. Then was the earth created, and many worlds besides, and the Son of God caused it to be proclaimed in hell among the fallen hosts that He would yet accord those who were desirous of returning to their allegiance to His Father, an opportunity of doing so; by blotting out from their memories all recollection and knowledge of their previous rebellion, and giving them a new temporary existence, or human being, in which they should have the opportunity of choosing afresh their Chief, whether God or the Spirit of Evil. To test their virtue, and to give them the dignity of victors, they should yet be subject to the temptations of the chief under whose banner they had previously enlisted, but not to his force, while the way back to perfect and everlasting happiness should be kept ever clearly open to them during the period of probation.

"Thus the creation and life of man is but a gracious opportunity, ordained by Mercy, for the restoration of fallen gods; and not resulting in the degradation of the previously holy and happy essence of the Deity. For those who shall avail themselves of the means, which the human life affords, of forsaking the Spirit of Evil, and returning to their holy allegiance, will have regained the unspeakable joys and happiness of their immortality; while those who neglect the opportunity will but return to the degradation, from which the Son of God, in His love, sought to re-exalt them."

The Governor appeared much interested in these remarks of the Levite, and was yet pondering them after the latter had ceased to speak, when the Hindu, who had listened with rapt attention, said:

"Truly this sounds like the teaching of wisdom. If this be truth it is a precious finding, and will enrich the theology of India. But I marvel that I could learn nothing of it from the Scribes at Jerusalem."

"It is all a fabric of false imagination," said the priest, forgetting decorum of speech in his religious zeal, "never having been written

by Moses or the prophets ; and the utterance of such blasphemy by a descendant of Levi is worthy of death."

The Levite shewed no sign of anger or excitement as he replied : "All knowledge and all truth have not been exhausted in the things already revealed to our early ancestors. Revelation of the nature of God and His works is not yet sealed ; nor will be while the world lasts. What I have spoken is from an angel of Heaven, and is revealed to justify the Creator's relation to man. And knowledge and truth shall continue to be unfolded, even in the heart of man, according to its earnest seekings and cravings, in every age, and even without the medium of prophetic voice."

In the further course of conversation Tobias observed to his friend Raphael : "Now I understand the meaning of the words of Solomon, which had been a mystery to me, where he says, 'For I was a good spirit.' And in reply to other objections raised by the priest, the Levite said :

"Happy is the man who, subjecting himself to the laws of Moses, conforms to them conscientiously. His obedience is true piety and true virtue. Happy also is he, among the heathen, who, knowing no written law, believes in the perfection of a Supreme Being, adores Him with simple faith, and makes it his religion to seek by purity of thought, word, and deed, the approval of his Creator."

The priest emphatically objected to this doctrine, and denied the theory of the liberality of God to the Gentiles, quoting the present condition of Samaria in confirmation of his views.

"It is evident," said he, "that the ritual of Moses and his priesthood is necessary in approaching God ; or why does He now punish the new colonists of Samaria for the omission of those rites ? These new colonists of the cities of Israel are faithful to the Gods whom they have been taught from childhood to worship, and worship conscientiously, yet are destroyed by lions for omitting forms of worship of which they are entirely ignorant." To which Raphael replied :

"You would represent the Just God, the Infallible Judge, to be less just than a human judge. What would you think of that judge among your people who, desiring that those who approached him should do so with four genuflexions instead of three, condemned to death all strangers who, in utter ignorance of his innovation, approached him with the usual three genuflexions instead of four ? Is it not possible that the visitation of the lions is attributable to natural causes ? Remember that when the cities of Israel were laid waste, and their inhabitants carried away, there was an interval of desolation, during which the lions of the forests roamed unchecked in the ruinous places, many of which became their dens, where whelps were brought forth and reared. No wonder, then, that the new settlers should find them there, and that the young lions should dispute with them the homes of their birth." This also the priest received as blasphemy.

Another curious question was raised by the inquisitive Governor of Samaria. He could not conceive how records so exact and innumerable

could ever be made of the actions of the lives of mankind, from which justly to award the various degrees of punishment or reward, merited by the millions of millions of probationists who would have to come up for judgment.

To this Raphael replied that the actions of mankind needed no actual registration in a book, they being all self-registering in the personality of the probationer. He said that the beauty of righteousness was registered indelibly upon the righteous, and the deformity of wickedness upon the wicked, all unmistakeably readable; and that the difference, in the end, between the two, was as great as the difference between a sheep and a goat. He instanced, as an illustration, though a feeble one, the countenance of an old man which was in some degree the index of the beauty or deformity of the mind.

The priest made no further reply, but sternly and contemptuously regarded the Levite as an imposter and a heretic. The Hindu, on the other hand, gave full credit to the Levite's teaching; and, when he returned to his own land, became the apostle of the new faith. The governor regarded it as an ingenious theory, and remarked that it might be received as a satisfactorily possible solution of the difficulty of faith suggested by their friend from India, even by those who would doubt the authenticity of any history of the pre-human soul.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TRAVELLERS REACH JERUSALEM.—HEZEKIAH THROWS OFF THE ASSYRIAN YOKE, AND PREPARES FOR WAR.—STRICT ENFORCEMENT OF THE MOSAIC LAW.—THE EXECUTION OF A CRIMINAL BY STONING.—DISCOURSE ON THE PRIESTS.—THE VANITY AND WANTONNESS OF THE LADIES OF JERUSALEM.—TOBIAS VISITS THE TEMPLE AND IS THERE ARRESTED.



TWO days later the travellers had entered the city of Jerusalem, and Tobias went direct to the house of an old friend of his family, whose name was Abner Benjonathan, a Benjamite, to whom he had letters of introduction, and by whom he was received with much welcome and rejoicing. It will be remembered that at this time the good King Hezekiah reigned; and that it was especially on account of the restoration of the pure Hebrew worship by the authority of that Prince, in conjunction with the preachings of the greatly gifted prophet Isaiah, that Tobit had been desirous for his son to visit the holy city, and offer sacrifices in the temple, that his mind might become so impressed with the solemnities of the Hebrew worship, and the grandeur of the teachings of the prophets, as to ever after hold in contempt the idolatrous practices of the land of his captivity.

When Tobias left the embraces of his parents to commence this journey, the Assyrian empire was in a state of profound peace, brought about by the conquests of the earlier years of the reign of King Shalmanezzer. The kingdom of Judah had continued a faithful tributary of Assyria all through the late war, and since; in fulfilment of the contract made by Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, with Tiglath-pileser, the predecessor of the present Assyrian monarch. At that time the Jewish King was so beset with powerful enemies on all sides, that he deemed it necessary for the preservation of his kingdom to purchase the protection of Assyria, not only by great gifts of gold and silver—which, on account of the insufficiency of his treasury, he made up by stripping the temple of its vessels and ornaments—but by a treaty, binding himself and his heirs, for ever, to pay the Assyrian Kings a yearly tribute. But when his son Hezekiah had restored the worship of God as it had been conducted in the earlier days of Solomon, and had re-arranged the internal administration of his kingdom, he set to work to thoroughly re-organise his military affairs, and caused all his male subjects, who were capable of bearing arms, to be so trained and officered that he found himself in a position, as he thought, to protect his kingdom from its neighbouring and

hereditary enemies, without the aid of his distant and powerful ally the King of Assyria. He was encouraged in this confidence by the success of an expedition which he sent against the Philistines, wherein he recovered from them several cities which they had wrested from the Jewish dominion during the reign of his father Ahaz. Therefore, when the King of Assyria's Surveyor of Tribute entered Jerusalem—the same who had been Tobias's companion from Nineveh to Samaria—and presented his credentials from the Tartan or Treasurer, he received, instead of the money, a letter from Hezekiah to the King of Assyria, repudiating all future liability to pay tribute; since he claimed to be in a position to defend his dominions without foreign assistance. This being virtually a defiance of the Assyrian monarch, preparations were immediately made to meet the probable consequences; and a day or two after the arrival of Tobias, the inhabitants of Jerusalem became active in preparations for defence. The smiths were commanded to put aside the occupations belonging to times of peace, and devote all their energies to the further production of arms and armour. Wherever the walls and forts of Jerusalem needed repairs they were strengthened. To provide against a prolonged siege, provisions of all suitable kinds were ordered to be brought into the city from the surrounding country; and the same precautionary measures were adopted in all the other cities of the kingdom. The male inhabitants were daily called out to warlike exercises by the sound of trumpets, and prizes offered for the competition of the archers, javelin men, and spearmen, who exercised from sunrise to sunset. And in the same proportion that patriotism was aroused, and the war feeling kindled, the minds of the people became inflamed, without provocation, against their late allies the Assyrians, and against all who were suspected to be their friends or well-wishers.

Meantime the old laws of Moses were being enforced with great strictness. No plea of ignorance was now admitted in extenuation of offences against their precepts; for, at the commencement of the reign of Hezekiah, teachers had been appointed to instruct the people by daily readings from the holy books, and by discourses thereon, in various parts of every city of the kingdom; so as to dispel the religious darkness brought upon the people by King Ahaz, when he discharged all the priests and Levites from their offices, shut up the temple, and forbade the teaching or practice of the old law. Therefore, at the time of which we are writing, which was the tenth year of Hezekiah, the people having been well instructed, the penalties of disobedience were severely enacted; and the sentence of death, by stoning, was frequently carried into execution. Thus on the day after the arrival of Tobias at Jerusalem, he was walking out with Joseph, the son of his host the Benjamite, to view the city, when they perceived a great number of people streaming in one direction, as though to some great gathering. On enquiry, they learned that an execution was about to take place, outside the Eastern Gate, and as it was the habit of the public teachers to enjoin the presence of the people at such scenes, the young Benjamite prevailed upon Tobias to go and view the horrid spectacle. The street which led directly to the East

Gate was the widest in Jerusalem, and was sometimes used as a place of gathering on the occasion of any great national oration. It was here that King Hezekiah had assembled the people at the beginning of his reign, when he announced to them his intention to restore the religion of their fathers. But so wide as it was, it was now crowded with the moving masses who were pouring into it from all directions, and pressing on to pass through the gate.

The place of execution was a sort of natural amphitheatre, indented on the slope of Mount Moriah, just below the East Gate, with the glorious temple towering overhead, and the beautiful valley of Jehoshaphat below. A space in the centre of the hollow was strongly enclosed, to restrain the pressure of the spectators, who crowded around in many thousands, and filled the embracing slopes to their summits. Just within the enclosure, where the execution was to take place, were arranged, at equal distances, twelve heaps of heavy stones. When Tobias and his friend the Benjamite had obtained places which gave them a view of these things, they enquired of one of the bystanders for what offence the criminal was about to suffer; and were answered that it was for breaking the holy Sabbath. In spite of the King's commandment that the law of Moses should in every particular be strictly observed, on pain of the certain infliction of its penalties, this man had been detected chopping dead branches from a tree in his garden on the Sabbath day. Three of his neighbours had borne witness against him before the Judge, and yesterday he had been sentenced to death. Another bystander, who overheard these remarks, joined in the conversation, and stated that he was a neighbour of the condemned man, and knew both him and his accusers. That he had long been an object of enmity to these neighbours; or, perhaps, they would not have witnessed against him. That, for his own part, he was sorry for the condemned; for although he had certainly broken the law, he had done so under circumstances that rendered his punishment regrettable; for, on last Sabbath morning one of his children fell grievously sick, and, to obtain the decoction of a certain herb for its relief, it was necessary to kindle a fire, for which no provision having been made, he had gone into his garden and lopped some dead branches from one of the trees.

These circumstances had been pleaded before the Judge at the trial, but he had replied that neither the law, nor the King, gave him any authority to admit any cause whatever as sufficient to justify the breaking of the holy Sabbath: that rather than break God's law to seek a remedy for the child's sickness, the child should have been left to God's mercy, for its protection till the morrow; and that the sentence of death must be executed.

While they were yet speaking the sad procession was seen to descend from the gate. First appeared the captain of the prison, followed by the criminal, who was guarded on each hand by two soldiers armed with bows and arrows, and drawn swords; next followed a priest who acted as sheriff; then the three witnesses, who were bound to take part in the execution by hurling stones at the condemned; nine professional executioners came next, to assist in

the accomplishment of the sentence of the law. These sustained among them the coffin prepared for the reception of the mangled remains. The sight was already horribly suggestive; but how much more dreadful when the executioners ranged themselves within the circle, each beside a heap of stones, and while the convict was kneeling in the centre, and yet lifting his hands to Heaven in prayer, the massive stones began to be lifted and hurled against him. It was customary to aim at the head of the victim; but, frequently, dreadful sufferings and mangleings had to be endured before consciousness was suspended. While his hands were yet raised to Heaven a crushing stone descended upon his shoulder, and, breaking the bones, caused one arm to drop; at the same instant another stone striking him on the breast forced him backward to the earth with a piteous cry of pain; while another missile rent open his side, and his agonised cries sickened the hearts of the spectators, although they were used to such scenes. The witnesses were now overcome with horror, and turned their eyes from the completion of their enmity. Each limb of the wretched sufferer was broken, and he lay a mangled heart-sickening mass in a pool of blood before his head received the fatal blow which sealed his eyes with darkness for ever. Tobias was so horrified at the sight that he repented having come to witness it; and, long before its finish, had turned away his eyes, and put his hands to his ears, to exclude the heart-rending cries of the victim of the law; until, to his relief, his companion intimated that the sentence was completed and the condemned man had ceased to suffer.

As they returned into the city, Tobias, after a long silence, said to his companion, "Is it not possible that the priests and judges wrongly interpret the laws of God, one of whose titles is the Merciful, in passing such a sentence for such a fault? It appears to me not only contrary to our conceptions of the Creator's love and mercy towards His living works, that they should be so mangled and destroyed, but a fearful debasement of the minds of those who are employed to execute such horrible judgments."

When Tobias had spoken, he perceived at his elbow a man whose costume denoted him to be a Levite, one of the porters of the temple; who, after looking intently into the countenance of the speaker, as though to fix in his memory the utterer of such sentiments, passed forward, and was lost to sight in the crowd.

"You must be careful," answered the Benjamite, in a low voice which could not be overheard, "how you utter such sentiments; for so great, at present, is the zeal of the priests and Levites, and many others, for the complete observance of the law of Moses, that they are ever ready to become accusers of those who give expression to disrespect of that law. This danger has resulted in an emulation among the people as to who shall be the most forward in bringing their presents to the temple, to win the countenance of the priests. My father rejoices in this zeal, attributing it all to piety; but, secretly, I ask myself how it is that the priests and Levites are suddenly converted to a life of holiness, as soon as the King extends his patronage to the religious; when, in the previous reign, while the holy books

were out of royal favour, the majority of these same men became the priests of strange altars, at the bidding of King Ahaz, and led lives which were in direct contempt of the laws which they now vindicate by frequent executions, such as we have just witnessed. Doubtless they prefer to be the priests and porters of the temple, as is shewn by their extra zeal in that cause; and there is one uncharitable explanation of the circumstance, which is, perhaps, justified by the falsity and selfishness of human nature, and the facts of their own previous lives; and that is, that they prefer the laws of Moses, because, thereby, the priesthood is more predominant, and more enriched by the numerous sacrifices and offerings of the people, than in the service of Baal; so that the meanest of the Levites now live in abundance, who, under other systems of worship, have no exclusive privileges, but obtain their bread in the ordinary labour market. Should King Hezekiah die to-morrow, and his son again set up the altars of Baal, the bulk of the priests would probably accept offices as they have heretofore done, in the new service, and would all require re-sanctification when the Mosaic law happened to be again restored. Thus it has been throughout our history, and we may reasonably doubt the piety of men who accept employment in whatever worship is fashionable, and change their God at the command of the King."

It will be seen, from these whispered remarks, that the young Benjamite, however cautious of the open expression of his views, was very irreverent of the priesthood; and his next observation further shews that he may have been anything but a true Jew.

"As to your question about the interpretation of the law, and the penalty of stoning to death for breaking the Sabbath, there can be no doubt that they have only correctly interpreted the law as delivered by Moses; for you will remember that the great lawgiver himself caused a man to be stoned to death for a similar offence of gathering sticks on the Sabbath; but, seeing that its severity appears inconsistent with the merciful character of God, we may reasonably wonder if it be really a law of God, or of Moses. But, my dear friend, we need be very circumspect in expressing our opinions on these matters; for those who would serve Baal to-morrow, if the King ordained it, will to-day witness to death those who utter a word of doubt of the perfection of the Mosaic laws and worship."

After a few moments of thought, the Benjamite spoke again, still in a very low voice, and thus gave utterance to a very sweeping aspersion:

"And I have heard it stated by the wise, who could themselves assign no satisfactory reason for it, that the priests of all faiths are, in general, the perverters and corruptors of the doctrines which they are appointed to simplify and conserve: for by their commentaries and interpretations they confound and falsify the simplicity of the original inspirations, ever instituting new ceremonies, and inventing new sins, by burdening the consciences of the people with precepts which they are sure to fail at some time in observing, and so making sins of conscience of those acts which would have been no sins but for these restrictions invented by the priests. It is, perhaps, the consequence

of the imposition of religious precepts impossible of strict observance, that the people so frequently rebel against all religion."

To these opinions Tobias made no answer; but in his heart was shocked at them, viewing them as somewhat sceptical of the divinity of the Mosaic law, and bitterly scandalous of a class of the holiest of men. His heart was deeply grieved, and his judgment dissatisfied at the scene which he had witnessed; but he preferred the severe zeal of his father's old friend, the senior Benjamite, to the irreverence and unbelief of the junior.

On the following day Tobias and his young friend again walked forth to view the wonders of the city, especially the splendid edifice which crowned the eminence of Moriah.

On this occasion, as during his previous walks in Jerusalem, Tobias was surprised at what appeared to him the almost complete absence of bashfulness in the Jewish women whom he met in the streets, in the bazaars, and in the market-places. Even the very young women laid themselves open to the charge, by their manners and style of dress. The latter, instead of being of a fashion to conceal the outlines of their beautiful persons, was made to exaggerate the voluptuousness of their forms; and instead of shrinking from the gaze of strangers, they frequently put the handsome young Naphtalian to the blush, by the steadiness of their gaze. For they went abroad with lifted veils, overmuch bedecked, and even sought to draw attention by wearing anklets, which tinkled at every step, like the tinkling at the heels of a horseman when he walks in his spurs. These reprehensible fashions had already caught the attention of the prophet Isaiah, during one of his seldom walks in the bazaars, and with the aid of the prophetess he had written:

"The daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing, as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and will expose them to shame and to ridicule. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, the chains, the bracelets and the mufflers; the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings, and nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the whimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods and the veils."

As the young Naphtalian ascended the steep streets to the holy mount he remembered with deep veneration that this was said to be the place where Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his son Isaac in trial of his religious faith and obedience. Also that on that spot, when it was the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, stood the angel of the great plague, with drawn sword stretched forth over Jerusalem, until David built there an altar, and appeased the offended Deity with his sacrifices. Then, as Tobias entered the sacred precincts, and beheld the glorious temple before him, glittering between and above the numerous white marble colonades which divided the various outer

courts, his heart was filled with a holy joy that he had at length reached the shrine of the especial Presence of God ; and with a holy faith in the acceptance of the prayers which he had longed to offer there. For had not Solomon at its dedication said, "Hearken thou to the supplication of thy people Israel when they shall pray in this place !" to which the Lord had replied, "I have heard thy prayer, and thy supplication that thou hast made before me." Tobias had ever a large share of confidence in the value of prayer ; and therefore prayer—the silent expression of the heart—was his constant habit, at all times, and in all places ; but here he felt himself more especially in the Presence of an attentive God, and great and happy was his faith as he knelt beneath one of the porticoes used for the purpose of worship, and poured forth his supplication on behalf of his parents and himself, and above all for the beloved daughter of Raguel, and for that happy union between them which should constitute the sweet joy of their future lives. Nor less did the atmosphere of this holy place inspire the heart with thanksgiving than with faith to ask.

Never before had Tobias experienced such an ecstasy of unutterable joy and satisfaction as when he arose from his knees, fully assured that he had offered his petitions in the very Presence of a listening and willing God, and that the fulfilment of his prayers was certain.

Later on Tobias was standing near the east entrance of the Court of the Levites, gazing, between the marble pillars of the portico, at the great brazen Sea, or Tank, supported by twelve colossal oxen in the same metal—for Hezekiah had caused to be replaced upon the backs of the brazen oxen that wonderful casting which Ahaz had displaced—when he perceived that he was intently observed by a priest who happened at the time to be entering the Court of the Levites in his sacerdotal robes. Returning the gaze of the priest, Tobias recognised him as the same whom he had met at the palace of the Governor of Samaria, and who had taken offence at his friend the Levite's history of the first condition of man. The priest had passed into the inner Court, and Tobias had forgotten him in his further survey of the magnificent temple, when to his amazement and consternation he was approached by two of the armed guards of the sacred edifice and arrested.

CHAPTER XX.

TOBIAS IS EXAMINED BEFORE THE JUDGE AS AN ASSYRIAN SPY, AND IS COMMITTED TO PRISON, TO AWAIT TRIAL BEFORE KING HEZEKIAH.

WITHOUT receiving any explanation of the cause of his arrest, Tobias was at once conveyed direct to the prison where offenders against the King were incarcerated. Although naturally alarmed at this dangerous and inexplicable position, he gleaned some comfort from the circumstance that his young friend had witnessed his arrest, and though they were prevented from holding any communication with each other from that moment, he doubted not that some influence would be exerted to defend him from whatever false charge had led to his capture. Otherwise, in a strange city, unknown, and no longer under the protection of his Assyrian friend, his position might reasonably have given rise to very serious apprehensions. The more he thought of the affair the more convinced he became that he had been mistaken for some other person, and would be relieved from his painful position as soon as the error was discovered. He could account in no other way for his presence in that prison, for he was sure he had committed no act which could possibly render him liable to such treatment. Innocence is said to be a comforter under such circumstances; and so it is in a certain sense. But it does not always comfort an impatient man to know that he is suffering without cause: it rather adds to his punishment by the consciousness, and resentment, of injustice. Tobias was getting into this mood when his captors again appeared before him in his prison, and conducted him before the Judge for preliminary examination. This Judge, named Elihu, of the family of the Izharites, was sternly just in the administration of the law; but ever joyful in the acquittal, and pained at the condemnation, of those who were brought before him for judgment. For there was no Mercy-seat in that Hall of Judgment, and the verdict must be strictly according to the evidence. Tobias, standing before Elihu in the compassionated beauty of modest yet noble youth, was thus interrogated by his accuser, who now appeared in the person of the priest who had been his fellow guest at the palace of the Governor of Samaria, and who had that morning recognised him at the temple.

“Young man,” said the priest, “you are required to inform my lord the Judge, of your name, your parentage, whence you have come, and the cause of your presence in this city.”

"My name is Tobias; I am the son of Tobit, of the tribe of Naphtali, at present a captive in Nineveh. I have journeyed from the city of Nineveh to Jerusalem by the command of my father, and by permission of the King of Assyria, to offer sacrifices at the temple, and to listen to the teaching of the holy prophets."

"You say that by command of your father, and by consent of the King of Assyria, you have undertaken this journey to Jerusalem. You are required to inform my lord the Judge how it happens that a captive, of the despised tribe of Naphtali, possesses the means to return to this land, and on what conditions the Assyrian King has been induced to permit this journey."

"My father is in high esteem with the Great King, and has been elevated to the high office of chief Purveyor to the King's table. The King's favour has therefore furnished both the means and the permission."

The priest paused before putting the next question, to give time for this answer to impress the Judge. Tobias did not know at that moment that the Hebrew monarch had revolted against Assyria, for the Assyrian Surveyor had only met with his repulse on the preceding day, and the circumstance was not yet generally known. Therefore Tobias perceived not that to confess himself in favour at the Court of Nineveh, was to become an object of distrust and suspicion in Jerusalem.

"You are required," continued the priest, "to inform my lord the Judge who were your companions on the journey from Nineveh to this land."

"My journey was made, throughout, in the company and under the protection of the King's Surveyor of Tribute."

"Inform my lord the Judge if you are acquainted with the Assyrian Governor of Samaria."

"I became acquainted with that Prince through his hospitality, when he entertained me, with the Surveyor and another companion of my journey, two days, at his palace."

"Tell my lord the Judge who is the other companion of whom you now speak, and where he is."

"My other companion was a learned and holy Levite, journeying also from Nineveh, and I left him at Samaria."

"Say if you are certain that your friend the Levite is not in Jerusalem."

"I am sure that I do not know that he is in Jerusalem; since I took leave of him in Samaria I have not seen him."

"Look around this hall, and then say again whether your friend is in Samaria or Jerusalem."

Tobias cast his glance over the countenances which were turned towards him, in great numbers, in the Hall of Judgment, and, presently, recognised his friend the Levite among the spectators, distinguished by the close attendance of two of the guards of the Hall. The priest had discovered his presence there before the examination of Tobias had commenced, and, to prevent his escape, had caused two of the guards to be placed near his person.

"Yonder I perceive my friend," replied Tobias, "but I was unaware of his presence in this city."

"You have stated," said the priest, "that the purpose of your journey from Nineveh to Jerusalem was to offer sacrifices at the temple, and to listen to the teachings of the holy prophets. Inform my lord the Judge what sacrifices you have at present offered, and what discourses of the prophets you have attended."

Tobias indeed felt some shame and sense of neglect of the holy purpose of his journey when he replied :

"I have at present neither offered sacrifice at the temple, nor listened to the preaching of the holy prophets. Perhaps it is scarcely sufficient excuse for the neglect of these holy duties that I have been but two days in Jerusalem, and have spent that time in viewing a city so wonderful, and so full of interest to a stranger, and especially to an Israelite returned from a long exile."

"Now inform my lord the Judge if it is your intention to remain in Jerusalem as a subject of its King, or to return to Assyria."

"My purpose is certainly to return shortly to my father at Nineveh."

The accuser then addressed the Judge, and said :

"Perhaps, my lord, I need seek no further, by interrogation of the prisoner, to justify the suspicion which led me to bring him before this tribunal, as a spy from the Court of Nineveh. That suspicion was aroused when, five days since, while at Samaria on the business of my lord the King, I met, at the table of the Governor of Samaria, this Naphtalian and also a certain Levite, on their way to our holy city, as it appeared to me, on some secret service of the King of Assyria. They were also, as the prisoner has confessed, in friendly companionship with one, whose nation, and whose office especially, are justly hateful to the children of Judah. Now I beg my lord to observe, that the prisoner at first concealed his fellowship with the Levite before mentioned, and spoke of the Assyrian officer as the only companion of his journey ; and that when afterwards he incautiously let slip the mention of another, he professed to have left him behind in Samaria, that he might not be sought for in Jerusalem ; but God has already led him into a snare, and delivered him into our hands. Further to avert suspicion from his accomplice the prisoner referred to him as a learned and holy Levite, while I shall have to bear witness against him that he is a teacher of impious doctrines ; a despiser of our holy religion ; and a blasphemer of the God of Israel.

"My lord, the prisoner has stated that his family is in high favour with the King of Assyria, the great enemy of our nation ; for what purpose is the son of the chief Purveyor sent here by that heathen Prince ? Surely not that he may offer sacrifices to the despised God of Israel—despised alike by the apostate Naphtalians, and the Assyrians ; nor to listen to the teachings of the prophets, in whom neither this rebellious tribe nor the heathen believe. And even while alleging this excuse for his journey, the prisoner is obliged to confess that he has neither sacrificed, nor listened to the holy prophets ; for, in truth, he has been employed in doing more faithfully the business of his foreign master, by examining the fortifications of our holy city,

and calculating the tempting wealth of its palaces, and the spoils of our golden temple, the wonder and envy of all the heathen.

"My lord, this young man of that tribe of Naphtali, so long rebellious against the God of Israel, and against the royal house of David, is no longer of our brethren, but is an Assyrian, a servant of Shalmanezzer, even as he himself declares, when he states that his purpose is not to remain in this city, a subject of our righteous King, but to return to Nineveh. Moreover he is one of the retinue of that servant of our enemy, who came here to shame Judah by demanding the tribute of slaves from a great and free people; and whom our glorious King commanded instantly to quit this kingdom, with all of his nation, on pain of death. By remaining here, after that command, the prisoner becomes a spy, even if he had not entered the city as such, and has merited the death pronounced before-hand by our King."

When the priest had thus made his charge against the youthful prisoner, and before the Judge had time to ask Tobias what he had to say in his defence, another accuser stepped into the place of witnesses, and, obtaining the permission of the Judge to speak, said:

"I also, my lord, can bear witness against this stranger that he is a despiser of the verdicts of our Judges, and a doubter of the justice of our holy laws, and that, therefore, no credence is to be attached to the avowed object of his presence in this city. For as I passed yesterday along the East Street, on my return from witnessing the execution of our just law against the Sabbath-breaker, I overtook the prisoner, and overheard him talking with another, and he said that he believed the judges exceeded the law in passing the sentence of death for Sabbath-breaking, and that such horrible judgments were debasing to those who executed them, and contrary to the nature of God."

In this witness Tobias recognised the temple porter who had gazed at him yesterday, when he had uttered sentiments similar to those now witnessed against him. At the moment when the Levite porter had ceased to speak, the attention of Tobias was attracted to a slight movement near the door of the hall, and he perceived his young friend the Benjamite retreating from a position which he had occupied during the brief trial. This circumstance added much to the embarrassment of Tobias. In a moment he would be called upon by the Judge to answer his accusers, and to speak in defence of his life, and now he was forsaken by the only friend on whom he had relied for vindication. Then it flashed upon his mind that had his friend appeared there to speak for him, he could have disproven none of these charges, but might only have exposed himself to share the danger of the grave suspicions which attached to Tobias himself. He therefore decided not to involve the family of his father's old friend in the misfortunes which had overtaken himself, by making any appeal or reference to them, but to trust to God alone for the vindication of his innocence, and breathed from his heart the brief prayer, "Lord, deliver me from this trouble." Then, his glance scanning the calm countenance of his other friend, known to him as the Levite Raphael, he found comfort in his presence. So selfish,

often, is the human heart that, unconscious of the wrong, it derives comfort from a companionship in trouble, when it should rather regret the trouble of a companion.

While these thoughts were quickly and painfully thrilling through the mind of Tobias, the Judge was regarding him with a countenance in which anger contended with pity, and presently said :

“ You have heard, young man, the charge preferred against you by a priest of God, that you have visited this city as a subject of the King of Assyria, to spy out the preparations of our lord the King of Judah for resisting our enemies. Have you any friends in this city who can speak for you ? ”

“ My lord, I am a stranger in this city, and have here no friends who can speak for me, except one who was the companion of my journey, and whom I supposed to be at present in Samaria, until my accuser caused me to discover him in this hall.”

“ The man to whom you allude,” replied the Judge, “ cannot speak for you, being himself under charge of treason and blasphemy. Therefore speak in thine own behalf, and if you are, indeed, not guilty, may God suggest to you words wherewith to justify yourself.”

“ My lord Judge,” replied Tobias, “ God has permitted me only the eloquence which should ever belong to utterances of truth, and I can say no more moving words in my defence, than that I am not guilty of the charge brought against me. When I left my father’s house on this unhappy journey, peace reigned throughout the Assyrian empire, and in the kingdoms of its tributaries and allies ; therefore my father, deeming it a fit opportunity, sent me to view this glorious city, the pride of all the true children of Israel wherever they may be scattered, and to worship within the precincts of the holy temple, towards which the righteous of our brethren pray from all the ends of the earth. Although it is true, my lord, as my accuser has remarked, that the tribe of Naphtalia has been long in rebellion against the God of Israel, and the royal house of David, yet has my father never followed the abominations of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin ; but, both before the captivity, and since, he has faithfully worshipped the God of Israel, and observed His laws, even to the avoidance of the bread of the Gentiles. Before the first captivity the name of Tobit, my father, was well known to the priests of the temple, for the regularity with which he came yearly from Thisbe to Jerusalem, to sacrifice, and to offer to the sons of Aaron the tenths of all his increase. I declare to you, my lord, in sincerity, that treason against the righteous King of Judah never entered my heart, nor the heart of my father who sent me hither, for his last words to me were of joy that Jerusalem was so righteously governed, the pure worship of God restored, and the voices of the prophets to be heard here, that I might worship and be instructed.”

Then the Judge enquired if there were any in that Court among the numerous priests and Levites present who retained remembrance of such a man as Tobit of Thisbe, whom the prisoner asserted to be his father, and to have been a devout votary of God at His holy temple. But no one present responded to this enquiry, and then

the Judge, after waiting a few minutes, turned to the prisoner and said :

“Thou hast answered to the charge of treason against the King of Judah, but without a single witness or circumstance to support thy words. What now hast thou to say to the charge of thy second accuser?”

“It is true, my lord, that when I witnessed the stoning of the Sabbath-breaker, my heart was sickened and horrified at his mutilation and sufferings, and on returning from the execution I remember to have asked whether it was not possible that the laws of God, one of whose titles is the Merciful, might have been misinterpreted in such a sentence. I did also say, that it appeared to me not only contrary to the love and mercy of God that His living works should be so mangled and destroyed, but a debasement of the humanity of those who were employed to execute such judgments.”

“I cannot but marvel,” observed the Judge, “that, in witnessing the just punishment of disobedience and contempt of God’s law, instead of profiting thereby, and learning to dread and avoid its terrors, thou hast been driven by those very terrors to a contempt of its divine authority, and placed thyself under its penalties. If thou hast any right as an Israelite to remain in this city and to worship at our holy temple, then thou hast merited death and shalt die for thy avowed contempt of God’s law and its administrators.”

The Judge paused ; but had not ended his speech. The dreadful words “shalt die,” shot like a poisoned arrow into the brain of Tobias, whence a sickening and enfeebling thrill hurried through his frame. Had death been presented to his mind in the heat of a just conflict, probably he would have faced it with a stout heart. Or, had he been sentenced at some heathen tribunal, for adherence to his assured religious faith, then might he have been sustained by the triumphant courage of the conscientious martyr. But, to suffer that shameful death, the dreadful horrors of which he had so recently witnessed, as a contemner of that very religion which he practised and revered—to be mangled and destroyed, alike in body and in reputation ; execrated by all whose approval and esteem he prized—how terrible to contemplate ! These sickening feelings and images, which flashed through his mind with that rapidity of conception which is quicker than utterance, were arrested, and the terror of death suspended, by the voice of the Judge, when he continued and said :

“But I am disposed to regard thee as an alien, and a subject of the Assyrian King, rather than as an Israelite, and, therefore, will not pass sentence upon thee for thy religious, or irreligious, views, but will remand thee for the judgment of our lord the King, as a secret agent of his enemy the King of Assyria.”

In this decision the Judge Elihu was guided by compassion for the youthful prisoner. Had he passed judgment upon him as a Jew, subject to the laws of Judah, he must have condemned him to death, on the charge of contempt of the law of Moses ; but by adopting one of the arguments of the first accusation, the prisoner could not be considered subject to the religious laws of the land, and, as a

suspected Assyrian agent, his case might be referred for judgment to the King, with the chance of acquittal, or imprisonment, instead of death.

Tobias was, therefore, conducted back from the Hall of Judgment to the prison, there to await the King's leisure to hear and decide his case. This sudden relief from the prospect of immediate death caused him to re-enter his cell with feelings of joy and thankfulness for his temporary deliverance. For as the moon, though of feeble glimmer in a sun-lit sky, is brilliant when contrasted with the surrounding darkness of night, so the present position of Tobias, though still dismal enough, was happy compared to the terrors of that dreadful sentence which he had already mentally suffered.

While Tobias was being removed by the guards who had him in charge, the priest stood forth again to accuse the supposed Levite, Raphael ; but, to the amazement of all who witnessed the mystery, the prisoner had disappeared from the spot where the attendance of the two guards was supposed to have secured his capture. The escape was marvellous, for, of all those who were standing near, not one had perceived any movement in the group, and, even while the priest and the Judge were looking towards the guards, in amazement at the absence of their prisoner, the guards had not missed him from their custody.

CHAPTER XXI.

MANASSEH, OF THE TRIBE OF MANASSEH, SUCCEEDS NATHAN IN THE PURSUIT OF SARA'S HAND.—EDNA RELATES TO HER DAUGHTER THE HISTORY OF HER OWN FIRST AND BLIGHTED LOVE.—SARA IS PLACED IN A GREAT STRAIT BY HER PARENTS.—THE MEDITATIONS OF TOBIAS IN THE DUNGEON AT JERUSALEM.



NOW, although Sara was delivered from the amorous persecutions of Asmodeus, in the manner already narrated, her fidelity to her cousin was not permitted to remain without further trial. Her beauty had disturbed many hearts; but while she herself repelled all advances, and her parents gave preference to the visits of the supposed Nathan in the character of her suitor, all other admirers were necessarily but distant worshippers. Although the most precious experience of a woman is the knowledge of the triumph of her charms, Sara preferred to withhold the exercise of that power entirely, rather than subject herself, in return, to the pursuit of undesired lovers. Therefore, as soon as she became aware of the effect of her beauty upon the hearts of men, she ceased to go abroad without the complete concealment afforded by the veil. But this concealment of her countenance added to the rumour of her beauty, and aroused a more watchful curiosity, and the additional admiration of her modesty, among her neighbours.

One of the foremost of her admirers, and one whose love became no less enslaving from the consciousness of its hopelessness while Nathan had the preference, was a young Hebrew named Manasseh, one of the captives of the tribe of that name. The concealed treasure which he had brought with him from the Holy land he had invested in sheep and cattle, and had prospered greatly in the increase of his flocks and herds. Business therefore brought this young man often to the house of Raguel, and sometimes he was invited there on the occasions of the Jewish festivals. During these visits it had become evident to Edna that Manasseh was among the most ardent admirers of her daughter; but the discovery afforded her little interest while her heart was set upon the richer Nathan for her son-in-law. Now, however, that the suit of Nathan had terminated so terribly, Edna soon transferred to Manasseh her favour, and afforded him abundance of opportunities, not only of completing his own thralldom to the charms of her beautiful daughter, but of besieging her heart with his importunate love.

Again Sara protested that her heart was immovable from its first attachment, and implored her mother to suffer her to free herself from attentions which were so distasteful to her, and which could only result in increased disappointment to the suitor. "Have you," said she, "so soon forgotten my dream, which assured me that my cousin was true to his promise, and would yet claim me; and the authority of which may not be doubted, since it was so terribly verified in the detection of the wicked Asmodeus?"

"My daughter," replied Edna, "you still talk folly. A long time has now elapsed since that dream, which was evidently only sent to you for the detection of Asmodeus, and not to enslave you to another phantom. I have never been fully persuaded that your dream, in promising you ultimate joy, signified that it should be in connection with your cousin. Certainly the long delay of fulfilment of such expectations should alone cause them to cease. For do you not know that you are wasting the days of your beauty?—that the time will soon come when your power over the hearts of men will cease, and should your obstinacy and your father's indulgence of it continue, will leave you ultimately among the neglected of women? Consider that you will then not only have laid up for yourself a life of solitude and contempt, but will have used your father's tender regard of your silly scruples, to extinguish his family among his people, and deprive him in his old age of seeing his youth renewed in his grandchildren. Remember, in time, that such obstinacy is not only folly, but wickedness in the sight of God; who gave you beauty to rejoice the heart of a husband, and that you might become a happy and honoured mother in Israel. Doubtless it was by the Will of Heaven that your heart escaped the snares of the false Asmodeus; that you might be preserved for the true and patient Manasseh."

"Ah, my dear mother," replied Sara, "you know not what outrage you would have me do to my own heart, in urging me to accept the suit of Manasseh, whom I cannot love; and to offer him my hand, when my heart is already dedicated to its rightful claimant. Have pity upon me, I implore you, and forbear to urge me."

"Tell me not, child, that I know not what it is to sacrifice a girlish passion to wisdom and parental authority. I also loved with an affection at least as ardent as yours; and was assuredly beloved in return, before I knew your father. Asaph and I were fond companions in the earliest innocence of childhood, all the days of which we passed together on the slopes of Hermon, where our parents lived and reared their flocks. When we reached riper years, and found that we loved each other, I was never so happy as when listening to the wooing of the fond shepherd. He would also sing to me dreamy songs of a future life of happy and unfailing love, to be spent among our flocks on our native Hermon. But when your father came to purchase sheep of my parents, he saw their shepherdess, and loved me, and sought to obtain me in marriage. At first I was shocked at the proposal, and felt that I could never be happy but as the wife of Asaph. More yet did I feel so when I saw that the young shepherd, discovering the proposal that had been made to my parents by the

wealthy dealer, was consuming his health with the grief of jealousy. But I was not allowed longer to tend the flocks, and Asaph, finding that we were now separated, left his home, and disappeared altogether from those mountains. Asaph being gone, I at length found courage to obey the will of my parents, and was married to your father." Here Edna paused, and seemed to recall dreamily some past scene to her mental vision, then said, half musingly, "Poor Asaph! I only saw him once for a passing moment after my marriage. You, my child, had been born about three months, and I was walking in one of the streets of Thisbe, in which town was my new home, carrying you in my arms, when Asaph passed me—so changed. He glanced at me and at my infant with a look which I shall never forget, and which I could not get out of my troubled mind for a long while after. Poor Asaph! Within a week I heard that he had died in Thisbe."

These sad recollections appeared to drive from Edna's mind the subject which had given rise to them; and on this occasion she left her daughter's apartment without further conversation.

But again and again were Edna's arguments renewed to induce her child to favour the suit of Manasseh, and every reason which Sara advanced in favour of continued celibacy brought forth some reply which, however powerless to affect the daughter's feelings, left the mother with a sense of logical triumph, and confirmed conviction that she was right, and her daughter wrong. To get her daughter wedded continued to be the great anxiety and effort of her life, and the struggle between them on this subject continued, with equal persistence on both sides, during the many months of Manasseh's visits, as before during the visits of Asmodeus. At length Edna again sought the aid of her husband's authority in the matter, and obtained it in a more positive character than before. In the course of her arguments with Raguel she said:

"Consider, my husband, if you are justified in neglecting to exercise your authority in this matter, when our own and our daughter's future happiness depend upon its firm exercise. Where our daughter is wanting in wisdom it is our duty to judge for her and enforce the adoption of our judgment. It is now several years since she saw her cousin Tobias, then a mere child; and during the interim we have never seen nor heard anything of him except the tidings brought by Nathan; which, if true, prove the folly of Sara's faith in him; and, if doubtful, leave no reason for her continued celibacy. Are you not permitting our only child to sacrifice her existence to a foolish and unrequited attachment, the charm of which would be broken if, by the exercise of your authority, she were compelled to wed? If, to indulge her present mood, you delay to take this step, she herself will be altering her mind, and wishing for a husband, when her fading beauty will have left her no lovers to select from, and our advancing age will have left us a desolate family, unblessed with successors."

"I must admit," replied Raguel, "that the expected appearance of our kinsman Tobias, to claim his cousin, appears daily less probable. Yet am I unwilling to use my authority as you recommend, to compel our daughter to marry against her inclination; especially when I

remember her dream, from which she derived so firm an assurance of the fidelity of her cousin, and the promise of ultimate union. Had not that dream been accompanied by an assurance of its divine origin in the terrible discovery which it brought about, I should certainly, by this time, have regarded it as an ordinary illusion of the imagination."

"There is no doubt," replied his wife, "that Sara's dream was an interposition of Heaven between her and the wiles of the genie Asmodeus. I regard the unmasking of the genie, to have been its sole purpose, and, that purpose being accomplished, I do not perceive that we should expect the fulfilment of all the details of the mere scenery of the dream."

At length, as was said before, Edna prevailed with her husband to aid her in opposing their daughter's constancy to the love and engagement of her childhood; and all Sara's tearful entreaties could obtain for her but a further delay of twelve months. And her father now declared to her that if, at the close of that period, her cousin had not appeared, either in person or by message, to claim her, she should wed Manasseh, if he were then willing to accept her for his wife.

This decision filled Sara with unceasing anxiety, and fixed before her a danger from which she saw no probable escape. So totally dependant was she upon her father, and without any other refuge should she decide to rebel against his authority, in the licentious land of their captivity, that her virtuous mind was filled with dread at the prospect before her. In theory death is the reserved escape from such a position; but the grim alternative bears not such an aspect to the young and joy-loving heart that it can be regarded as a refuge, though it may be, in some rare cases, preferred of two terrors. Sara was certainly not without some reliance upon God for her deliverance; but that reliance was not so complete as to conquer her anxieties. She knew that very painful disappointments and crosses were often permitted, as though the Providence of Heaven were too high to heed the secret fancies of the human heart; or only so controlled the events of life, as to bring ultimate good out of apparent evil, and justify the philosophy of phlegmatic elders, that such things "turn out for the best." So that, when she prayed for deliverance, the comfort of prayer was neutralised by the fear that *possibly* her cousin might not appear in time, and then *certainly* the dreadful day of shame would come suddenly. And a year was so brief a space to include so important a contingency.

Without ceasing to implore Heaven in this great trouble, it occurred to Sara to seek also yet further for human consideration by appealing to the generosity of Manasseh. The propriety of this step she long debated; and, ultimately, concluded to adopt it only as a last resort. "I will wait," thought she, with the best patience I can command, until the appearance of Tobias is entirely hopeless; and then I will so far seek favour of Manasseh, as to implore him to protect from himself, and from others, one whose heart he can never win; and to earn my deep gratitude, nearest to love that I have to offer, by shielding me alike from his own passion, and from the suits of others. If

he will generously serve me thus, he shall be my accepted friend ; but never, never, shall he be my accepted lover ; and the God of Israel help me ! ”

It was in the month Tebeth that Raguel came to the decision to wait twelve months, namely, until the end of Chisleu, before betrothing his daughter to Manasseh. Edna even so far anticipated events as to plan that her daughter's nuptials should be celebrated on the following Passover, three months after the betrothal, so that they might combine the festivities of the wedding with the great religious feast, when all the Jews of their acquaintance would be at liberty to do full honour to the occasion.

Now when this happened at Ecbatana, Tobias had already spent six months in solitary confinement in the state prison at Jerusalem ; for King Hezekiah had not yet found leisure to hear his case. Indeed, the suspected spy appeared to have been altogether overlooked and forgotten in the exciting business of state which followed the rupture with Assyria. And perhaps it was better for the prisoner that it happened so ; for excitement against their late allies and protectors had grown so high among the Hebrews, from the King downwards, that the time was most unfavourable for the trial of such a prisoner, who was without open friends in the city, and without any evidence in favour of his innocence. To follow out the various feelings and conditions of mind which the young Naphtalian had experienced up to this time would be too tedious ; and we can only glance at some of the results of his silent sufferings and meditations. It has already been stated that when he found himself, by the lenity of the Judge Elihu, remanded for trial by the King, and, for the time, delivered from the terrible death which he had thought already pronounced against him, he re-entered his cell with feelings of joy and thankfulness. But when the excitement of the escape from immediate death had subsided, he perceived that his position presented little cause for rejoicing. For many mornings when he awoke it was with a sickening sense that his trial and condemnation might happen before the close of the day ; and it was only when he supposed that the hour for the rising of the courts approached that he felt the brief lease of life renewed until to-morrow. But the human mind is so elastic, and so adaptable to most circumstances to which it may be subjected, that even that duress of the convict which must terminate in ignominious death, becomes, in time, endurable with calm patience. Dread expectation slumbers, and, if free from bodily pain, the present affords its pleasures. In course of time, however, even the dreaded trial, which should give liberty or death, became less terrible to anticipate compared to that horrid solitude and uncertainty ; and the sound of the jailor's approaching steps, instead of filling his heart with fear, gave rise to hope of deliverance from that hateful cell.

“ Am I forsaken of God,” he would sometimes mentally ask, “ that I am here so cruelly and unjustly restrained, even in His own holy city ? Has the God of Israel become deaf, that my prayers are all unheeded, so near to His sacred shrine ? How difficult it is to make out the ways of His Providence ! The days which were appointed to

be spent in His worship, after pilgrimage, and in gathering wisdom from the sage prophets, are spent in a horrid dungeon, where my youth is being wasted in sorrow. Nor am I alone injured by the false accusation of that priest—and he, too, a minister of that holy temple whereat I came to worship, and a servant of that God to whom my innocence is well known—not alone do I suffer, but, alas! how anxious will be the waiting of my father, and how painful the impatience of my tender mother, when the day of my appointed return shall have passed by, and their son returns not, nor sends tidings of his coming; but, perhaps, instead, rumours of revolt and war reach them, and even tidings of the impious offences with which I am charged—O God of Israel, liberate me for my dear parents' sake! But, alas! I have prayed and besought God so long in vain, that there appears to remain no virtue in prayer—so long in vain, that I can no longer pray with faith. How different to the blissful experiences of that period of prayer spent in the temple on the morning of my arrest. Then, as I prayed, every sentence begat the joy of the expectation of its fulfilment, and my heart was filled with the ecstasy of perfect faith in God, and in His blessing. O, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Then I had assurance of the felicity of my parents; of the fidelity and constancy of my fair cousin; and of my own future bright happiness in each of them. Why were my prayers responded to with such ecstasy of promise, and my soul ravished with the smile of God in His holy temple, while treason, which already lurked for me near the sacred shrine, was even then permitted to entrap me? O God, withdraw the cloud from Thy countenance, and deliver me!”

At other times his habitual reverence of his father's will was insufficient to prevent complainings against that authority which had commanded the journey to Jerusalem, instead of permitting him to follow the bias of his love, and seek his cousin in the cities of Media. For the most bitter and disquieting of all his imaginings during that long solitude was the suggestion that the delay caused by this unhappy journey, and its consequences, might occasion the disposal of his cousin to some other suitor. The thought was intensely horrible, and sometimes when it occurred to him he felt disposed to dash himself madly against the strong door of his cell. How different this frenzy to that patient faith with which he had hitherto regarded as certain his ultimate union with his fair cousin. It was in vain now that he recalled those precious words of hers, which he had treasured in his heart as its comforter, from the moment they were uttered, accompanied by the music of the waters of the Tigris.

“Knowing I am yours, I shall be happy; and will still be yours until you find me; and even if you cannot find me.” “If you tell me that you will be true to me, I will believe you; and shall be sure you will find me again, as the Prince of Moab at last found his Princess. For although he had King Solomon to go to for advice, and you have not, yet you have a greater than Solomon, and a more powerful, and a more just, for your guide; for you can go to God Himself, and He will direct you to find me.”

When he now recalled these words, he would exclaim, “O Lord,

save me from doubting Thy Providence. For have I not made a long pilgrimage to this Thy holy city for guidance to the desire of my heart, and made my earnest supplication to Thee—so immeasurably greater than Solomon, and more powerful, and more just; yet, instead of Thy favour, violent hands are laid upon me, even at Thy very footstool, and I am dragged from Thy temple to this filthy prison. Save me, O God, from doubting Thy Providence!”

Such was the unhappy frame of mind indulged by the young captive, with little variation, for many months. But let us wait, and see how deep the peace, and how strong the faith in God, which shall ultimately spring out of these afflictions; so that he shall even bless that long solitude which caused him to meditate on the ways of God to man.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN EVENT AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES IN ECBATANA, AND THE REAPPEARANCE OF ASMODEUS.



THE bitter dreary months of Tebeth and Shebat passed without any special event connected with this story. The month of Adar, with its sudden Spring, awakening to love and joy all animated nature, arrived without its usual charms for the fair maiden at Ecbatana. The sadness which had taken possession of her heart became only more intensified by the surrounding joyousness. The earth and the air were full of the voices of happy love ; and she felt that her condition only, was worse than desolate. Delightful Nizan, like a sweetly perfumed bride, gloriously arrayed, found Sara still unhappy. The latter rains had ceased ; the gardens were brilliant and sweet with flowers ; the time of the singing of birds was fully come. But the voice of the turtle dove which she had hitherto so loved to hear in the early Spring, sounded now like a mockery of her sorrow. This happy season was all as discordant to the feelings of the maiden, as joyous and heedless laughter to the ears of the mourner. But she listened with more patience to the plaintive sweetness of the nightingale, which now sang at her window each night, as though in sympathy with her love sorrows. And with Nizan had come the great feast of the Passover. Sara would have withdrawn herself altogether from the festivities ; but her father commanded her to come forth among his guests ; and her mother charged her to shew no disfavour to Manasseh ; who, she reminded her, was in all probability destined to become her bridegroom on the next occasion of that grand festival. Then ripening Ijar came and passed, leaving Sivan a full cornucopia for the feast of Pentecost. Tamuz, Ab, and Elul, fierce and parching months, when "the hart panteth after the water brooks," brought no tidings of hope ; for Tobias was still pining and re-pining in duress at Jerusalem. Then came Tisri and its feast of Tabernacles ; and there remained but two more hopeless months of the year of grace. During this feast the Jews, deserting the cover of their houses, erected bowers in their gardens and on their housetops, where they dwelt during the day and slept at night, for the days were still very warm, and this was in commemoration of the long residence of their forefathers in the wilderness in the time of Moses. Edna was now in high spirits at the near approach of the time appointed for the betrothal of her daughter, and remarked to Sara that although two

more months of delay were permitted her, yet she would be wise to look approaching facts in the face at once, and abandon so illusive an expectation as the appearance of her cousin: "Take the opportunity which this festive season offers, to banish the foolish past from your recollection; and, embracing mirth, look forward only to the immediate happy future. Foolish indeed is that girl who so bestows her heart, that she cannot reclaim it, whole and unwounded, at need; and, by obliterating the past, avail herself of a wiser and more advantageous opportunity of settling in life when the opportunity is presented. What think you do I seek, but you own advancement and happiness? You have long despised my counsel; but remember that it is now your father's command, that you appear at this feast in your most becoming attire, and most costly ornaments; and, especially, that you receive Manasseh with the countenance due to an accepted lover, and your future husband."

Sara certainly loved her mother, and preserved towards her that reverence which is due to a parent; but these feelings were blended with resentment of her persevering endeavours to marry her daughter against her daughter's inclinations. And when Sara was thus charged to act a heartless part she exclaimed:

"Mother, I *will not* be so untrue to myself, and to Manasseh, and to my absent cousin, as to act thus the part of a false woman. I will *never* give Manasseh cause to suppose that I love him, or even tolerate him as a lover, when you know that I can only loathe him in the character which you say he is to assume."

"These are indeed rebellious words," replied Edna, in astonishment and anger, abruptly leaving her daughter's apartment.

This passed on the first morning of the feast, when the guests invited to the house of Raguel were already beginning to gather there.

"Now," thought Sara, "I must indeed test the generosity of Manasseh and implore him to save me from himself. My mother I cannot move to save her own daughter from that dreadful degradation of submitting her hand to one, while her heart is another's; and my father, because of my mother's counsel, will no longer listen to me with patience. I am thus compelled to throw myself at the feet of Manasseh and implore *him* to have compassion upon me, as a last resort."

Consequently that same evening, after one of the dances in which Sara had, by command of her father, joined hands with Manasseh, she took the opportunity, when they were resting in one of the arbors alone, to open the matter to him thus:

"Manasseh, I have a boon to ask of you; not of love, but of disinterested self-denying friendship."

"Say rather, fair lady, that you have a command for your slave. Your slave listens that he may obey you."

"Nay, I like not this manner of speech: O, Manasseh, release yourself from this slavery and be free. Be also generous and manly by ceasing to seek the unwilling hand of one, whose heart you can never win."

"You are pleased, Sara, to seek to alarm my love and my joyful hopes. I say again that your slave listens for your commands, but will never accept release from his service of love to you, while he has your father's permission to wait upon you."

"You remind me of my father's authority over me, and shut your ears to a helpless maiden's claim upon your own generosity. I pray God to influence your heart that you may be willing to heed my petition." Sara's voice faltered, and she wept.

"What means this, fair lady?" said Manasseh, with an expression of alarm, "I pray you speak plainly."

Recovering her courage, Sara continued, "Manasseh, you have sought my love with a courtesy and constancy worthy to beget love in another. But I have told you already that I belong to one from whom my heart can never be recalled. Will you not, under these circumstances, generously waive the right in me which my father offers you, and abandon your suit? So shall my gratitude be earned, where my love can never be won."

"Sara, your charms have obtained complete conquest over my heart, so that I can only live in your presence; and on my part it is but just and manly that I should persist in seeking the conquest of yours. You have told me, and your mother has told me, of an old affection, which as a young girl, you conceived for a boy, your cousin, whom you have not since seen. I am not jealous of such a love. By persevering in the siege of your heart I will even compel you, fairest maiden, by my devoted love, to yield it; and to forget that unrequited attachment of your childhood. To heed any obstacle whatever, to so fair a prize as your hand—even your own present aversion—would be to woo you with too faint a heart to merit so glorious a success as I anticipate."

"Rather confess, that to besiege the heart of a helpless maiden, in the unavoidable absence of the rightful claimant, is treason."

"Pardon me, fair damsel, for reminding you, that until a maiden passes to the protection of her husband, she is only subject to the claim and will of her parents."

"Yet, let me ask you, what is the value of a wife, whose hand is seized by force, whether it be by permission of parental authority, or by the lawless rape of a robber?"

"Her value, when it means the beautiful daughter of Raguel, is beyond price," exclaimed Manasseh, throwing himself at her feet and attempting to embrace her knees. The act transformed the timid reasoning suppliant to a proud imperative fury, and, thrusting Manasseh from her with violence, she arose and exclaimed, "No force yet! I despise your meanness. God save me from your touch."

Manasseh arose and stood before her, and though somewhat surprised and humbled at the warmth of the unexpected check, he disguised those feelings in a gaze of admiration and said:

"Fair lady, your scorn and your anger but add magnificence to your beauty. Such a prize is worthy the patience of a god; and Manasseh will be patient indeed to win it, although his love will make

it seem an age from now until the Passover. Yea, your magnificence at this moment but strengthens my love ; and I find myself drawn after you by a charm so irresistible that were Death to become your champion and threaten my way, I must grapple with him to pursue you."

So saying Manasseh retired from the bower, and left Sara standing splendidly beautiful in the flush of anger. He had led her in the late dance, the most admired among all her fair companions, like the chief of the Graces among rural nymphs ; now she had assumed the manner of an excited war-goddess. Manasseh had no sooner retired, than Sara discovered Asmodeus standing before her in his usual semblance of Nathan the merchant. Her roused spirit enabled her to realize his presence without that shock of fear which it might have caused her at an ordinary moment, and she stood unchanged in manner, while he thus addressed her :

"Fear not, Sara, that I am here with any purpose that need cause you alarm ; nor fear the triumph of the rude Hebrew who has just left your presence. He has said truly that the prize of your hand is worthy the patience of a god ; nor shall the patience of any mortal prevail while a god must wait. Death shall indeed be your champion against Manasseh, and against every aspirant to the hand of the most beautiful of the daughters of men ; who is guarded by the jealous Asmodeus."

"Nathan, for so I still prefer to call you in your present guise, I pray you to withdraw. My trust is in God alone."

"I will obey you quickly, fairest of women ; but I pray you for a moment not to dismiss me by the power of the unjust, though irresistible, spell which you possess. Remember, when you are delivered from the importunities of mortal lovers, that it is I who shall have delivered you, by my watchful love ; which shall prove as immortal as my nature. Whether the reward of that patient watchfulness will ever be joy, or perpetual sorrow, I ask not now. But know, Sara, that my immortal race, like the immortal souls of mankind, claim descent from the same Supreme Source, and fell at the same time, from the same high seats of Bliss. Before the Deluge we were distinguished among the daughters of men as the sons of God, and met not the avoidance of the fairest and wisest ; therefore why should the daughter of Raguel——"

"Nathan ! I will not hear you further ; avoid this bower."

The genie departed ; and Sara presently sank down upon a rest of fragrant leaves, overpowered at length by the emotions she had so long sustained. When Edna came to seek her daughter she found her sleeping there, and supposed her to be merely wearied with the fatigue of the dance.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ADDIN AND CAMON AT ECBATANA.—THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES AT JERUSALEM.—TOBIAS IN HIS DUNGEON.



ON the morrow two new comers were added to the party of guests at the house of Raguel, both young men. One was named Camon, a distant kinsman of Raguel, and the other Addin, a royal Prince of the tribe of Ephraim. For some years they had been travelling together through the cities of Assyria and Media, as merchants, and were now returning to Nineveh, where their guardians had been settled at the first captivity by King Tiglath-pileser. But with the pursuit of trade they had combined another, and, in their own estimation, more important errand with their scattered people; a secret errand which we shall find occasion hereafter to explain.

When Sara heard of their arrival, and that they were on their way to Nineveh, her mind became much agitated. They were going, she thought, within reach of her cousin Tobias; and, if they adopted the route which avoided the river Zab, would probably pass in sight of the very house on the Tigris, which she supposed still to be the habitation of her kinsman Tobit. Why should she not send a letter to her cousin? Certainly he might yet be absent on his mysterious journey; but more probably had returned, considering the time that had elapsed since she heard of his being at Carchemish, and since she had in spirit visited him in the Garden at Damascus. But could she write to him with maidenly propriety, after so long an interval of silence and separation? She paused much at this doubt, until, at last, she concluded that she ought to write; if only to inform her cousin of the place of her residence, which unless he knew, he could not communicate with her; and why should she, instead, trust to his discovering her by miracle, or improbable accident; especially at a time when his presence was so grievously needed for her rescue? Then it flashed upon her mind that the arrival of these travellers, so opportunely, was probably God's own Providence in her behalf; and she no longer hesitated. Seeking them, she was soon introduced to her kinsman Camon, and to his friend Addin. The former was a young man of very gentle manner, with an open, pleasing, but touchingly sad countenance, which avoided the glances of women. Addin was more handsome, of a noble figure, and carriage more dignified than was usual with the captive Israelites; but his joyous eyes rested and feasted on beauty too boldly to please Sara. Addin she would

avoid ; but Camon should be her messenger, if he would confidentially undertake that service for her. As the travellers were to leave in the morning there was no time to be lost. So, having obtained Camon's willing consent to do her errand, she wrote the following, superscribed:

“For the hands of Tobias, the son of Tobit, the Naphtalian, residing on the south-west bank of the Tigris, opposite the Gate of Triumph of the city of Nineveh.

“My Cousin,—For the first time since our sorrowful parting, I find, this day, a means of communicating with you. Our distant kinsman, Camon, of Nineveh, with whom you are perhaps acquainted, is my father's guest for one day at this feast of Tabernacles, and the obliging bearer of this letter. For, after some hesitation, I have determined to follow the impulse of my heart, rather than the dictates of maidenly reserve, and to write to you ; especially since, if I am silent, you will probably be late in learning in what city of Media our residence has been fixed. I hope God has blessed you abundantly, my cousin. Time presses, and yet I know not in what words to tell you what I would have you know of my affairs. Is it for me to remind you of the past? Yet I cannot say what my heart is bursting to tell you, without bringing it to your recollection. I am sorely beset. Although I hide my face as much as possible from the gaze of men, yet is my hand sought after, and my father has appointed that my marriage shall be consummated at the next Passover ; unless some person, whose lawful prohibition dare not be disregarded, shall appear before the end of Chisleu. My soul revolts at the prospect ; but I am helpless. Pray that God may, in some mysterious way, deliver your much afflicted cousin, SARA.”

Perusing her letter after she had finished it, she mentally exclaimed, “How coldly worded, and disguised, to one whom my soul yearns toward ! Yet perhaps too distinctly warm from a maiden so long neglected. It shall pass, however, that he may at least know where to find me, if he will.”

In handing the letter to the charge of Camon, she intreated him to deliver it personally to her cousin, and with the utmost possible despatch. On the morning of the third day of the Festival the two travellers proceeded on their journey.

Sara now began to enjoy a more hopeful condition of mind. She believed that God had, at length, regarded her sorrow, and that the letter she had entrusted to Camon would prove Heaven's means of deliverance.

So do mankind often mistake ordinary events for special acts of Providence ; and some are so foolish as to doubt altogether the divine governance of terrestrial events, when they discover that they have been deceived, although the error was only in their own self-confident judgment.

But the comfort which Sara obtained was real while it lasted, although derived from an illusion. An illusion because he to whom she had written with so much maidenly delicacy, and with disguised, though unmistakeable, constancy of love, and hope of quick response, was yet a prisoner in far-off Jerusalem ; in his cell where joy reached

not yet, although the sounds of music and the hum of Jerusalem's merriment penetrated the iron-guarded windows of that still prison-house, all the day long, while the great Festival lasted.

Jerusalem was like one great fair. Its normal population was more than trebled by the gatherings of the Jews from all parts of the kingdom of Hezekiah. Its broad streets of palaces, as well as the poorer quarters, were lined on each side with arbors, erected against the fronts of the houses, which were used as festive dwellings during the day-time; and the house-tops throughout the city were occupied by another sylvan encampment, where the people slept during the seven nights of the Festival, beneath branches of the palm, the willow, the myrtle, and the citron. The daughters of Jerusalem were merry and resplendent; the young men, losing the war excitement in the universal festivity, crowded the gorgeous bazaars, and enriched the merchants by their purchases of gifts to be offered to beauty, to kindred, or to friendship. The old men of the city discussed, with their visitors from the provinces, the vigorous defensive preparations of the government against the expected invasion of the kingdom by the King of Assyria; and found hope of peace in the delay of the approach of that Monarch. And, when this uppermost subject was exhausted, the more religious among them would converse on the miraculous deliverance of their forefathers from Egyptian bondage, to sojourn in tabernacles, and die in the wilderness of Sinai; of their children, free-born in the wilderness, who marched thence to win the fruitful land, whose garnered harvests and the end of their dwelling in tabernacles, their descendants had celebrated, as now, for about three-fourths of a thousand years.

The music and din of merriment of this Feast were not the first sounds of the kind which had risen from the city to the unsympathizing ears of the prisoner. The Tabernacles had come round a second time since his arrest, with the intervening Passover and Pentecost; and during the round of the seasons his sufferings had been increased by the bitter cold of Winter and the heat and thirst of Summer. During this time the smart of his injuries had often led him, in his impatient resentment, to curse his false accuser, the priest, and to pray in a bitter spirit for his punishment, although, so sorely tried was his religious confidence that he almost doubted the efficacy of prayer, whether for the discomfiture of his enemies, or the deliverance of himself.

But the recurrence of the Tabernacles found him in a somewhat improved state of mind and spirit. Though his faith had been more and more tried by the continuance of his imprisonment, he was yet becoming more reliant upon God. This had come about by his now frequent recollection of the holy sayings of the prophets and sages of Israel, which had been committed to his memory in the course of his religious education, but, heretofore, forgotten when so much needed. Such passages as these had come to his remembrance with healing virtue:

“My son, if thou come to serve the Lord prepare thy soul for temptation. Set thy heart aright and endure with constancy, and be not

hasty in time of trouble. Be patient when thou art changed to a low estate. For gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity. *Believe in God* and He will help thee. *Wait* for His mercy. Ye that fear the Lord, hope for good, and for everlasting joy and mercy. Look at the generations of old, and see if any did ever trust in the Lord and was confounded; or did abide in His fear and was forsaken; or whom did He ever despise that called upon Him? For the Lord is full of compassion and mercy, long suffering and very pitiful, and forgiveth sins, and saveth in time of affliction. Woe be to fearful hearts and faint hands! Woe unto him that is faint-hearted, for he believeth not, therefore shall he not be defended. Woe unto you that have lost patience! What will ye do when the Lord shall visit you?"

These last sentences sounded to him like words of doom from an angel of God, and filled him with alarm:

"Then woe unto myself!" thought he, "for I have been faint-hearted and believed not, and I indeed have lost patience." This brought him to earnest humble prayer instead of impatient complainings to God; for he remembered with comfort, the conclusion of that same exhortation, afterwards preserved, with other wise sayings and exhortations, by Jesus the son of Sirach:

"They that fear the Lord will prepare their hearts and humble their souls in His sight, saying, We will fall into the hands of the Lord and not into the hands of men: for as His majesty is so is His mercy."

Thus did he at length obtain comfort from prayer, even in the midst of his sufferings; and faith in God's care of him, even while his deliverance was yet delayed, and the way of escape quite unapparent. And such is true prayer and true faith. For even the faint-hearted can pray with comfort in the midst of happiness, and have faith in God in the midst of prosperity, when there is nothing to encourage doubt of His loving care. Tobias now enjoyed that confidence which inspired the Psalmist when he said:

"The wicked watcheth the righteous and seeketh to slay him. The Lord will not leave him in his hand; nor suffer him to be condemned when he is judged."

"The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord: He is their strength in the time of trouble; and the Lord shall help them and deliver them. He shall deliver them from the wicked and save them, *because they trust in Him.*"

"How near," thought Tobias, "have I been to utter destruction! God's people are to be delivered *because they trust in Him.* My trust was well nigh gone."

Again, when he felt his anger rising against his accusers, he would remember the words:

"Fret not thyself because of the man that bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger and forsake wrath."

But the comfort produced by this passage was not the sublime peace of a forgiving spirit. It was a calm waiting for the punishment of the evil-doer. "My enemies speak evil of me; when shall they

die and their name perish?" "The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The wicked have drawn out the sword to slay such as be of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart." "Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quickly into hell."

The peace of soul which we said would result from the trying imprisonment of the young Hebrew is now in blossom. But it is not yet ripe fruit. His heart is comforted by tried faith; but not yet warmed and renewed by divine Love. His cry now is, "My enemies speak evil of me; when shall they die and their name perish?" instead of "Father, forgive them!"

On the sixth day of the feast Tobias felt an extra longing for liberty. The morrow would be the most important of all the seven days, and he desired greatly to join in its holy and impressive ceremonies. During his journey from Nineveh he had looked forward to witnessing, and sharing the Festival of the Tabernacles, and especially to joining that last day's grand procession of the sons and daughters of Jerusalem, who in many thousands would descend to the valley of Jehosophat, with their earthen pitchers, and filling them at the sacred fountain of Siloam, return with their burden to the summit of Mount Moriah, and pour forth the holy water before the brazen altar. The music of the pouring forth of the liquid sacrifice would be accompanied by the strains of four thousand singers and players upon the harp, cymbal, trumpet, and psaltery. Then he repeated the prayer of the psalmist, so appropriate to his condition:

"Judge me, O God, and plead my cause; O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For Thou art the God of my strength; why dost Thou cast me off? Why go I mourning because of the enemy? O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God, my God. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him in freedom, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

But his song of praise, in freedom, for his deliverance, was not to be sung yet awhile.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ANNA MOURNS THE ABSENCE OF HER SON.—ACHIACHARUS AND ESARHADDON.—PRINCE SENNACHERIB.—TOBIT TAKES A JOURNEY TO RAGES IN MEDIA.—SARA'S CRITICAL SITUATION AT ECBATANA; HER FORCED BETROTHAL TO MANASSEH.—CUPID HAS BROTHERS BESIDES ANTEROS.—TOBIAS IN PRISON REMEMBERS THE TEACHINGS OF RAPHAEL WHICH BEAR HAPPY FRUITS.—HIS DREAM OF THE CELESTIAL PARADISE.



FROM the house of Raguel in Ecbatana, to the state prison in Jerusalem; and now from Jerusalem to the house of the chief Purveyor in Nineveh, Fancy conveys us with swift flight at this feast of Tabernacles. We reach Nineveh on the seventh and last day of the feast. With Tobit and his wife Anna it has been no feast, but a time of sadness and painful anxiety; although the ceremonies and religious observances of the occasion have been strictly observed. On previous occasions, ever since Tobit's exaltation, his extensive grounds had been covered by a complete encampment of bowers, tenanted by nearly all the principal Jews of Nineveh, assembled as the guests of Tobit. For not only did the King, according to his original promise, permit his Hebrew favourite to worship God after his own manner, and keep the Sabbaths, but also encouraged him to observe, within the bounds of his beautiful residence, all the Jewish feasts, forms, and ceremonies. This year only those of his own family, or near friends who could especially sympathize with his sorrow, were invited to his sad tabernacles.

Tobias had already been absent about nine months beyond the utmost limit fixed for his return, and nothing whatever had been heard of him since the return of the King's Surveyor of Tribute with tidings of the revolt of Judah. Anna had from the first upbraided her husband with heartlessness in sending away her only child on that long journey; but since her son's return had become over due, her mournful complaints were very bitter and painful to witness. Nearly every morning she went forth through the gate of Triumph, crossed the Tigris, and from the roof of her old residence, still occupied by Belaaron, her husband's pensioner, watched towards the south-west for the approach of travellers, faintly hoping that she

might catch sight of her darling in the distance, returning at last. But she had never yet met any traveller from Jerusalem of whom she might even make enquiries how matters went on there; and she would return in the evening only to mourn and despair afresh, and to double her husband's burden of sorrow by her reproaches. Still, although sad and anxious, the Purveyor himself held to a more constant and patient hope of his son's ultimate safe return. On the morning of this seventh day of the feast, Anna was gone forth as usual, and her husband was sitting alone in one of the arbors, reading some comforting passages from a papyrus scroll, when his nephew Achiacharus approached him and enquired if there was any tidings of his cousin Tobias.

Achiacharus was one of the most intelligent, as well as one of the most handsome of the Hebrew youths—nor only of the Hebrew youths, but of all the Assyrian courtiers. His father, the Purveyor's brother, had died in Nineveh at about the time of Tobit's advancement; and the latter had immediately taken Achiacharus into his house, and caused him to be educated with his own son. Since the departure of Tobias, Achiacharus had fallen into the society of Esarhaddon, the youngest son of Prince Sennacherib, whereby he had come under the notice of King Shalmanezar, who had shewn him great favour, and caused his education to be continued under the tutors of his grandson Esarhaddon. So rapid was his progress in the higher branches of the learning of the Assyrians that he surprised his instructors and confirmed himself in the favour of the King. Let it not be supposed that the King was advanced in years because mention is made of his grandsons; for, owing to the very early marriages of the East, one in the prime of life frequently had grown up grandsons about him.

The companionship of Esarhaddon and Achiacharus ripened into a mutual affection, and in time became a repetition of the loving friendship of Jonathan and David. Achiacharus now resided with his friend the Prince at the royal palace, whence he had just come to the house of his uncle to enquire if any tidings had been heard of his cousin Tobias.

"None," replied Tobit, "but I trust that God will restore him to me before his way is barred by the march of war. Tell me if the King has yet made known his purpose towards Judah." For although Tobit was a frequenter of the Court of Assyria, and an early recipient of its general news, his nephew, from his residence in the palace, and his intimacy with the young Prince, often became possessed of the counsels of the royal house long before they reached the ears of the general courtiers, and he replied:

"The Prince of Assyria has again petitioned his father to permit him to lead an army, immediately, against Jerusalem; before other dependencies are encouraged, by the delay of punishment, to follow the example of Hezekiah. But so great is the change which has come over the King since the decline of his health, that he who chastised the rebellion of Hoshea by the entire destruction of the kingdom of Israel, will not yet consent to send an army against

Hezekiah. The King purposes, instead, to send an embassy, offering the Jewish King an opportunity to renew the Assyrian alliance on terms more honourable to Judah than those of the old treaty. Prince Sennacherib is much angered at his father's pacific disposition ; and was even enraged at his own sons, Adrammelech and Sharezer, when they remarked, while retiring from the Presence, that, while the King's health was so precarious, it was perhaps well that the heir should remain in the capital. Yet I think the Prince will adopt the opinion of his sons when he has pondered it ; for it cannot be disguised from those who have the opportunity of attentively observing the King, that his health is steadily failing, although the physicians repeat their hopeful assurances."

"It is the custom," said Tobit, "of physicians, when speaking publicly of the health of Kings, to speak hopefully, until death approaches so near as almost to announce himself. But I trust that God will preserve this King who has lately shewn so much favour to our people, and now restrains the rage of his son Sennacherib against our brethren, the children of Judah."

"But from all I can gather," continued Achiacharus, "I fear Prince Sennacherib must in the end so far prevail, that although he may not be permitted to march in person against Jerusalem, a force may be sent against her under the Tartan. For it is the opinion of those who brought home the defiance of King Hezekiah, and looked on the determined countenances of that King's advisers, that he will consent to no terms short of complete independence, unless under the menace of a powerful army. Meantime, Prince Sennacherib is very active as commander-in-chief of the Assyrian armies, and is looking well to the training and discipline of the soldiers. He now spends most of his time in those reviews, preparations and organizations which, in Nineveh, always indicate an approaching campaign on a large scale."

"Yet do I rather incline to the opinion, my nephew," replied Tobit, "that until Prince Sennacherib himself lead the army—since the King is now unlikely to do so, and Prince Adrammelech is too young—the invasion of Judah will be postponed. For the Kings of Assyria, as well as those of Egypt, have ever been jealous of trusting the command of great armies to a subject, who might unite ambition with the opportunity to become dangerous to the throne."

"I trust it may be so ; especially that my cousin Tobias may with more speed and safety return home. And now I will tell you, uncle, that I have reason to fear that this rebellion will prejudice our people, even in this city."

"That should not be," remarked Tobit, "for it is well known to the Assyrians that the peoples of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were two separate nations, and hereditary enemies from the time of the death of Solomon, through the reigns of many kings, until Israel was scattered and Judah remained ; and therefore we should not be confounded, as a people, with the children of Judah, in this rebellion."

"Yet Prince Esarhaddon has warned me, in friendship, that his father, Prince Sennacherib, cannot, since this revolt, look upon one

of our people with a kind countenance ; and that I myself, but for the favour of the King, would be in danger of dismissal from the palace. I was also much concerned to learn that the Prince had been heard to enquire if the son of the Purveyor had returned from Jerusalem, and on learning that he had not returned, had remarked that he should answer for loitering among rebels."

"You have informed me of a new cause of anxiety, my nephew, on your own account as well as that of my son and myself, and we have increased reason to pray for the health of the King."

"But Prince Esarhaddon has promised to remain my friend, whatever may happen, and to protect me, if it should become necessary to do so, in secret. I am the most anxious on account of the prolonged absence of my cousin Tobias."

This conversation set the Purveyor studying to prepare for a change of fortune ; for the ill-health of the King alarmed him for the security of those who depended upon the royal favour, and led him to anticipate the early succession of Sennacherib. He therefore determined to take the first opportunity to seek the King's leave of absence for a few weeks ; during which period Achiacharus should discharge the duties of his office, and he would take a journey into Media to a friend whom he knew to be residing in the city of Rages, and secretly deposit in his trust a sum of money, which he had accumulated against a future day of adverse fortune.

But it was some months later, in the month of Ijar, that Tobit obtained the King's leave of absence, and started for Media, secretly bearing with him ten talents of silver to be deposited in trust with his friend Gabael of the city of Rages.

What ! has Ijar come round again ? Then dreaded Chisleu is already some months gone by, and we have suddenly overleaped Expectation. The last month was Nizan, the month of the Passover, when from our pregnant story was due the birth of important issues.

Manasseh had lived in the enchanted regions of successful love—successful in the conquest of the hand, though not of the heart. But he was contented. No rival appeared in response to Sara's letter secretly intrusted to Camon. She was astounded at her position, and could not realise it ; but was, nevertheless, betrothed to Manasseh in spite of her protest at the ceremony. Edna was angry at that protest ; but, judging that only death could prevent the marriage, she had been joyously busy preparing her daughter's bridal attire. Raguel was grieved at his daughter's continued obstinacy, and gently assured her that it was evidently the will of Heaven that she should wed Manasseh ; and that she must bend her will to obedience, or be guilty of impiety towards God, her parents, and the law. She had heard and beheld all in sullen silence : but not with resignation. For although she saw no way of escape she was determined never to resign herself to Manasseh. She would again protest at the bridal, as at the betrothal. But while the dreaded day was yet in the future she blindly endeavoured to believe that it would never come. Sometimes she remembered the threat of Asmodeus, and wondered that she could find more hope, after all, in the jealousy of an evil spirit,

than in the promises of God. Yet she had spurned the aid of Asmodeus, and preferred to trust in the Holy One who appeared now so slow to deliver. Once more she had appealed to Manasseh to spare her. If he would spare her, even on the condition that she should reject her cousin, she would vow never to wed at all, and would live the grateful friend of Manasseh all her days. Otherwise she must ever resist and hate him. The only answer she obtained was that no entreaty or condition whatever could deliver her from his love. That he would compel her to love him yet. That his conquest of her hand was but her greater conquest of his heart. That while she complained of force, it was only her beauty which compelled; though it compelled him to seize her unwilling hand by the grant of her parents. "Therefore remember, fair lady," said he, "that the defeat of your cruelty and scorn will still be your own triumph—the triumph of your charms."

Perhaps Cicero was right in asserting that Cupid had brothers, besides Anteros, skilled in love's archery. Or, perhaps, the varieties of love which men exhibit are to be ascribed rather to the nature of the stricken heart, than to the sweet poison of the arrow, or the differing influences of those boys, the sons of Venus. Some lovers find joy only in the assured acceptability of their love. They must have inviolable reciprocity. It would be impossible for them to accept the beloved hand, unless assured that the heart joyfully accompanied it. Their joys of love are entirely dependent upon mutuality. If a rival be preferred there is no desire to supplant him; although that preference will blight the happiness of the unsuccessful one while life lasts. Such is the true love of a true man. Another loves heedless of reciprocity; but his jealousy of rivals is as cruel as the grave. His love is no loftier than the passion of the jealous bull, or of that fighting gallant the cock. Another heeds neither rivals nor the choice of the chosen one, so that he possess her either through gold, intimidation or parental persuasion. Such a passion is lower than the jealous affections of the patriarchs of herds and hens. Such was the passion of Manasseh.

But we gladly avoid the contemplation of that low passion; and of the horrible tyranny which threatened the fair Hebrew maiden. She was compelled to abide, patiently or impatiently, the development of the future, and so must we; and we return to him, towards whom her pure heart yearned in love and craving of deliverance.

Tobias, still a prisoner in Jerusalem, was, happily, ignorant of the terrible arrangement, the issue of which appeared inevitable at Ecbatana. We left him, at the time of the feast of Tabernacles, trusting in God for timely deliverance. Yet striving for patience to "*wait* for His mercy." He was no less trusting, and waiting, for the punishment of his accusers; who had caused him so much misery. That state of mind was an improvement upon his previous scepticism and despair. But now we shall find him still further advanced in his spiritual health. In solitary confinement the days are very long. Weeks are very tardy in passing; and months are quite long periods of the prisoner's life. Thus the time of his patient waiting for the

interposition of Providence, when he should "yet praise Him in freedom," appeared so long as to cause him almost to doubt again whether Heaven took cognisance of his position.

He often thought of his friend Raphael, the supposed Levite, and wondered if he had been led away from judgment to death, or had shared the same fate as himself, and was also immured in some part of that same horrid fortress. If the latter, how was *he* bearing his adversity? Tobias could not imagine his friend other than philosophically and religiously patient under such circumstances. O that he had his helpful company now! He would review their pleasant companionship from the banks of the Chebar to the city of Samaria, and recall some of their conversations by the way; in which Raphael had ever enlightened the darkness of Tobias's mind, on whatever subject they spoke, and satisfied all his doubts with authority and conviction. O that he had him there now, as the companion of his solitude! Perhaps he would set right this mystery of God's Providence, and shew why even the upright are permitted to suffer tribulation, and so large a proportion of their brief lives to be, apparently, wasted in sorrow. He was, at present, as much mystified in this matter as the psalmist, who said: "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am. Behold, Thou hast made my days as a hand-breadth, and mine age as nothing before Thee: surely every man at his best is altogether vanity."

We have already mentioned how Tobias, for a long time during the early part of his imprisonment, had forgotten those religious lessons which had been impressed upon his memory in his childhood; and how at last they recurred to his mind and afforded him so much faith and comfort. So had he still longer, during that period, entirely forgotten the more recent teachings of Raphael. He was wondering what answer Raphael would have made to his enquiry why men, even the just, are so often doomed to suffering, when they were created so capable of joy, as well as so sensitive of pain. Then he remembered the teaching of the Levite that the human existence here was merely probationary, and this world a path of pilgrimage to newly accessible Heaven. Tobias had been praying hard and earnestly for deliverance; yet that deliverance was so long deferred. Was not his faith being tried that it might become established? He had prayed and expected that his path through life should be one of uninterrupted happiness, commencing with his blissful union with the delightful daughter of Raguel. "But, surely," thought he at length, "it is idle indeed for men to pray that they may escape those very trials of virtue for which alone they came into this probationary existence. How can we expect to live already like unfallen gods in this temporary world of purgation?" Thus he gradually progressed to an entirely new train of thought, and began to understand those passages "As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord chasteneth thee." "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord."

As he pondered these things his heart became warmed and illuminated. The new warmth was joyous. He perceived that the

Heaven-chastened man was blessed in being urged onward in the great race after immortal happiness, and reminded that the terrestrial path was no abiding place. And the new light revealed to him, with more distinctness and assurance than ever, the great ultimate reward of the patient pilgrim to Heaven. That prospect of life, which, especially to the youthful imagination, generally presents a long vista of hopes, whose perspective ends in an invisible point, was now all changed. The end grew into the most prominent and important of the whole. The objects of the way appeared insignificant compared to the revealed glory of its termination. He began to make out a Country in which he was entitled, by his divine Father's will, to reclaim a glorious estate, compared to the possession of which the toils of the way were not worth a murmur. The warmth and light were indeed new to him, for the warmth made his heart comfortable even when he thought of his accusers; and the light revealed to him such an heirship that in his joy he could readily pardon all his enemies. These feelings, once germinated, grew rapidly into a settled peace, accompanied by a love for all mankind, and a desire that all, even his enemies, might share the happiness of his new discovery. Now the prospect of death had no terrors for him, come when it might. His imprisonment he learned to regard as a disguised blessing, since it had led him to study the teachings of his friend Raphael, and derive so much happiness from them, which he had not found leisure to do while exposed to the daily excitements and pleasures of the outer world.

What now had become of his love for his fair cousin? It was not only undiminished by this change, but was become more purified and exalted; for *true* love is holy and Heaven-born, and will outlast the journey of life, being as immortal as the soul which it rejoices. Tobias felt a happy psychical union with his cousin, which assured him that they were kindred spirits knit by a bond of love which should ultimately produce them mutual joy for ever; even should they find no opportunity to rejoice together on their way to the land of ever-happy everlasting Love. He would like most dearly to make that journey of life in her sweet company, so long as that journey should yet last; but not only was he now willing to die, and realize at once his high destiny as a restored son of God, but he would *rather* die. Then, he hoped, his soul would be permitted to watch and protect, unseen, those whom he loved so dearly, until the time of their final re-union.

So assured now was his faith in God, and God's merciful purposes towards man, that he could say, with full appreciation of the words, "Now I know that my Redeemer liveth." "Thou, O Lord, art my Father, my Redeemer." And that appreciation filled him with a joy and peace that passed all description and all understanding.

One evening he fell asleep, thinking of his future glorious inheritance. He had been turning over the stores of Memory, where he had lately found so many precious things laid up—full of comforting meaning now, although meaningless to his childish mind when first put by there. And he had found these words:

“God is our refuge and strength ; a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.

“There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God ; the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her ; she shall not be moved.”

The water allotted to Tobias in his cell that day had been insufficient, and still thirsty, he fell asleep full of imaginations of the glories of that City of God, through which flowed the gladdening waters of the river of life ; the city of the celestial tabernacles of God's redeemed ones ; a city lighted by the Presence of God, and for ever immovable. He slept, and dreamed that he was travelling towards it, thirsting for its waters. He saw it before him, and heard the music of the streams which flowed down the sides of its beautiful hills into the river. He reached it and drank of the waters for which he had panted like a thirsty hart. The feeling of weakness and languor from which he had long suffered, as the result of his lengthened imprisonment, forsook him at once ; and he was refreshed as he had never before been. Then he travelled on many miles through the bright country, without the slightest sensation of fatigue. All around, and as far as the gaze could penetrate, rising against the sky, were eminences of various forms and heights, like mounts of solid glowing gold : they were reared against a background of delicate turquoise, pale ruby, and topaz, for such were the glorious tints of the heavens. The whole was atmosphered in living glory. And on all these mounts were beautiful erections such as the fancy loves to claim as the future mansions of the just ; the pleasant dwellings of the pure and happy. In more distant parts the glories of the objects and the heavens so blended, as to give the outlines of the mansions and the mounts the appearance of faint ærial tracery on the rich sky. All shadows were softened as with a fine golden mist, and the inspiration of the air seemed to renovate with divine life, and to maintain immortality. The foliage which waved here and there, and especially around the mansions, sparkled in the rich scene like emeralds and other precious stones, and the fruits like gems illumined with divine light. All was peace. The heart knew no care nor burden. The soft hum of happy life wearied not, but soothed the ear. Nor did the light weary the eye nor oppress with heat. The land radiated its glories ; the heavens shed lustres upon the land and its happy mansions ; and the mid-air seemed ajoy with mingling delights. But language cannot describe it. It was something which the most poetic imagination, having once let go, cannot re-grasp. And as he traversed the golden paths of this land of Emanuel, diapered with shadows of the breeze-waved foliage, fruits, and flowers of Paradise, he heard sounds of joy, and ravishing music proceeding from the various mansions, and was wondering that he had met none of the inhabitants abroad, when he perceived, approaching him, a fair Seraph. It was Raphael in his own glorious shape, of course

unrecognised by the dreamer. That grand poet who sang so sublimely of heaven and angels thus describes this Seraph :

“Raphael, the sociable spirit, that deign’d
To travel with Tobias
A Seraph wing’d ; six wings he wore, to shade
His lineaments divine ; the pair that clad
Each shoulder broad, came mantling o’er his breast
With regal ornament ; the middle pair
Girt like a starry zone his waist, and round
Skirted his loins and thighs with downy gold
And colours dipt in heaven ; the third his feet
Shadow’d from either heel with feathered mail,
Sky-tinctured grain. Like Maia’s son he stood,
And shook his plumes, that heavenly fragrance fill’d
The circuit wide.”

The sight of this glorious being kindled in the heart of the dreamer that heavenly love which the angels bear to each other—more ecstatic than ever was inspired by the fairest loveliness of the daughters of men. And the archangel welcomed the dreamer with sweet mien, and, walking with him, conversed respecting that city of God.

“These mansions,” said Raphael, “are the habitations of God’s redeemed ones. Here they will know sorrow no more, but live for ever in unfailing happiness. The light of this holy place is the light of the revealed Presence of the Supreme, to dwell in which insures never failing bliss and immortality. This city is immeasurable, its mansions countless, and its beauties ever fresh. Here will be thy abode in due time if thou continue patient and faithful to the end ; but not yet. Thy contentions with the world are not ended, nor thy patience sufficiently tried. The Lord of this city loves thee ; beware that thou grieve Him not ; nor risk the forfeit of the glorious inheritance which awaits the faithful.”

After this the vision became confused and indistinct, or memory failed to restore it ; for when Tobias awoke he felt that he had walked far and conversed long with the glorious angel ; but could recall no more of his words, nor of the celestial scenes. He tried to sleep again and continue the dream while his mind was yet filled with its glorious images ; but though his repose was sweetly tranquil, and he seemed to be dosing in Heaven, he dreamed no more that night.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CONSPIRACY OF ADDIN AND CAMON AGAINST ASSYRIA.—THE DEATH OF MANASSEH.—SARA RESTORED FROM SICKNESS BY A CURIOUS CHARM.—HER FATHER JOURNEYS WITH HER TO NINEVEH.—PRINCE ADDIN SEES HER THERE AND BECOMES ENAMOURED.



Now follow Addin and Camon into Nineveh, where they have been for some months settled, having jointly stocked with precious stones, and gold and silver ornaments, a shop in one of the streets of the jewellers. We have already stated that Camon was a distant relative of Raguel, and that he had an open and pleasing, but touchingly sad expression of countenance. He was once an accepted lover, and very happy, for he had a heart capable of intense love and happiness. He also experienced that it was capable of intense misery when the beloved one proved faithless, under a mother's persuasion, and married a suitor more wealthy than himself. Since that event he had regarded all women as heartless and dangerous, and avoided their society as much as possible, bestowing all the strong affections of his heart upon his friend Addin; for his parents, of whom he was the only child, were now both dead.

Addin was a descendant of one of the royal families of Ephraim. We have described him as very handsome; bold in his admiration of the beauty of women; and from the consciousness of his royal descent, carrying himself with a more dignified mien than was usual with the captive Jews. In the daring of his ambition he even contemplated the restoration of the kingdom of Israel under his own crowned leadership. Camon fully entered into these plans and hopes; and already regarded Addin as his lawful Prince. To impart to the chiefs of the families of the scattered Israelites their plans for a new exodus from the land of their captivity had been the chief purpose of the travels of the two friends through Assyria, Media, and Persia. When Addin was yet an infant his parents had been suddenly slain in Samaria in a rebellion against his royal house, and himself had only been saved by the secret flight of his nurse, with her charge, into the land of Naphtali. Thence he had, a few years later, been carried into captivity; his high birth being known only to a few devoted friends. The parents of Addin had been worshippers of Baal; but in the land of Naphtali he had fallen under the charge of those who trained him to the observance of the Mosaic law. Attached by a more than brotherly affection, the two youths had united their fortunes, and traded and travelled as a firm of jewellers.

It was one evening towards the end of the month Ijah, the month succeeding that of the Passover, that the two young men were walking together through one of the wide streets of Nineveh, in a quiet part of the great city, conversing in the Hebrew tongue. They were discussing in undertones, but with all the hope and ardour of patriotic youth, the prospects of the restoration of their people.

"I have heard it confirmed to-day," Addin was saying, "that the health of the King continues rapidly to fail. And this opinion is general at the palace. It is even whispered that Prince Sennacherib has ceased to importune his father to permit him to lead war against Jerusalem; being now fully convinced that he will very soon be able to head the army as its King, and lead it against whom he may please."

"And my heart is firm in its faith," said Camon, "that the God of Israel will fight for the good King Hezekiah; for I cannot find, in all the history of our people, that a King of Israel or Judah, who trusted fully in God, and made His laws to be observed in the land, as this King is said to have done, was ever left a prey to the heathen. Thy father's house, my dear Prince, would never have fallen, nor the ten tribes have been scattered, had not the true God been excited to anger, whose worship was neglected for the worship of Baal."

"I trust, my dear Camon, that your faith may be realised; for then will the rising of our ally, the Governor of Media, aided by my powerful contingent of Hebrews, who now only await the signal to rise, be attended with easy success, and his establishment on the throne of Media more speedily secured. My heart yearns now for that great battle in which I and my people will aid to exalt a tributary Governor to be an independent King; and so earn his gratitude and powerful alliance in the future restoration of our own people. Then will commence our march toward the land of our fathers, our army increasing in numbers and strength day by day. The King of Tyre I can also rely upon, to aid me in destroying, or enslaving, the present Assyrian holders of our patrimony. Mutual safety and prosperity will be secured by our union against the ambitious tyrants of Assyria, whose defeat is most important to Tyre, as our land is now an open Assyrian road to that kingdom. So it should be with the King of Judah. But I marvel that my messenger, who started on my errand to that Prince two years since, has never returned. The revolt of Hezekiah certainly took place at about the time when my messenger should have reached Jerusalem, and it may be that the King, while looking to be benefited in his rebellion by the rising of the Medes and captive Israelites, may yet not intend to aid the establishment of an independent kingdom of Israel. I rather fear that Hezekiah, who is too proud to retain the alliance of so mighty an empire as Assyria at the expense of a little tribute, will be also too proud to endure a rival Hebrew kingdom; and although he may desire the return of the ten tribes, it may be only that the ancient kingdom of Solomon may be restored under his own sceptre."

Before Addin had concluded these remarks his eye had begun to scan the figure of a beautiful damsel who was sitting, pensive, by a fountain.

We should have mentioned that the streets of Nineveh, excepting those devoted to business, rather resembled roads through a vast garden than the streets of a modern city; and more space was covered by the luxuriance of eastern horticulture than by buildings. Hence the vast extent of this queen of cities. The tributaries of the Tigris, which descended from the northern and eastern mountains, were made to water the whole city by a great network of artificial veins; and the care, energies, and inventions of the vigorous intellect of a thousand years had been devoted to its completion and improvement. Gilded domes and cupolas blazed in all directions above the green of the trees; and shafts of polished granite and marble, supporting gorgeously painted capitals and friezes, contrasted their uniformities and brilliancies, with the luxuriant growths of eastern nature with which they were encompassed, while fountains of clear, cool water played at frequent intervals.

The companions were just passing at some distance one of these fountains, when, as we observed before, the attention of Addin was attracted towards a form sitting beside it. The maiden's veil was partly raised—lifted, probably, when she had found herself quite alone; and she was now so lost in thought that she had not observed the passing of the two friends, the sound of whose footsteps and subdued voices had, perhaps, been unheard amid the nearer music of the falling waters. The exquisite beauty of her form and hair was distinctly visible; but her countenance was only partially revealed.

"See, Camon," said Addin, "a beautiful daughter of our people. Is she listening to the waterfall? Perhaps pondering on the surrounding instances of heathen grandeur. Or is she waiting the delayed arrival of some fortunate lover?"

"Nothing so happy," said Camon, "judging from the sadness of her attitude."

It would have been an act of unnatural self-control to have beheld that fair form and passed on without a lingering admiration. The gaze of Camon in that direction was very brief; and its effect was only to add to the sadness of his countenance. But Addin paused and prolonged his gaze, as though studious to recognise the lady; until his friend induced him to move by reminding him that they were near the house of Simeon, whither they were proceeding to meet a secret messenger from the Governor of Media.

"I have been thinking, Camon, that I have seen that graceful form before, and in that same melancholy attitude. Or it may be that she brings to faint recollection some fair image of my dreams. Stay; is it not thy kinswoman, Sara, whom we met in Ecbatana?"

The young men both paused and looked back again. The lady had now dropped her veil, and was rising; and near her was one, previously unobserved by the passers by, whom Camon at once recognised as Miriam, the maid-servant of Sara, who had several times brought him messages while he was staying at the house of Raguel, in Ecbatana.

"You are probably right in your recognition of the veiled figure," said Camon, "for the other damsel is indeed the maid-servant of

Sara, the daughter of my kinsman Raguel. I marvel at her presence in this city."

"Was not her marriage to have been celebrated at the Passover?" enquired Addin.

"It was; and I am even now conjecturing that her husband, Manasseh, may be the messenger from Ecbatana whom we are going to meet at the house of Simeon. Yet she looks not like a young bride just past her honeymoon. Indeed she appears very sorrowful. But we shall probably hear respecting her, or even meet her, this evening, at the house of Simeon; for whoever may be the messenger there can be little doubt that his journey from Media was made in her company."

As it would have been an act of extreme unpoliteness to have attempted to address, or even recognise, a veiled lady in the streets of Nineveh, Addin, who felt a much stronger interest than Camon in the circumstances of Sara, was compelled to restrain his curiosity. While Camon, more interested in the captivity of his nation, than in the individual sorrows of a beautiful woman, resumed the previous conversation, saying:

"In regard to the King of Judah, I should not fear, my dear Prince, any opposition from him to the re-establishment of the kingdom of Israel. While I am certain that no heathen Prince will prevail against the good King Hezekiah, so am I sure that the King of Judah will never cause a bow to be drawn against a King who shall win his crown by delivering Israel from captivity, and leading them back to their inheritance under the banner of the Most High. Our restoration will be the Lord's work, and Judah will join with Israel in praising Him for the manifestation of His power and mercy."

"Is it possible, Camon, that her affianced husband is dead? Surely she might rather be taken for a young maiden widow than a bride."

Addin's mind and thoughts were so full of recollections of the beauty of the daughter of Raguel when briefly seen at Ecbatana, that he had been quite inattentive to the words of his companion, and scarcely knew that he had been speaking.

"I trust, my Prince, that you will not allow your mind to dwell upon the beauty of this woman, should it prove that she is indeed a maiden widow, but shun her influence as a snare in your path to deter you from winning a noble place in history."

"Nay, my friend, be not so ready to censure my admiration of a beautiful daughter of our own people. Remember that she is not a 'strange woman.' You think, too, that she may be the wife of Manasseh, and, if so, cannot much concern me. But surely she is a queenly damsel, and would well become a throne were her hand free to make a King happy."

Camon could not misunderstand these words. He saw with regret that his friend was already deeply interested in Sara, and that, should her hand prove to be free, he was almost ready to offer her a share of his prospective royalty. Such an element in their plans caused Camon immediate anxiety, and he heartily hoped that either Sara

was under the care of her husband, or might never again be met by Addin. In such matters Camon had long acted the Mentor, and had frequently to use all his influence and eloquence to prevent Addin from straying after beauty, to the peril of the cause of their people.

When they reached the house of Simeon, whither they had walked by appointment to meet secretly an emissary from the Governor of Media, they found that messenger to be Raguel, the excuse for whose journey was a visit to his kinsman Tobit, of well-known loyalty to the King, for the benefit of the health of his daughter Sara. For that maiden had been suffering from a grievous illness, from which her recovery had appeared for some time very doubtful, and which was brought about solely by the anticipations of the dreaded month of the Passover. And Manasseh would not relinquish his claim to her unwilling hand. But an event occurred which probably saved the faithful maiden from death, although it still left her the prey of such terrors that her recovery was far from complete. A few days before the time appointed for her marriage, Asmodeus appeared before her in her chamber, still in the well-known and courteous character of Nathan the merchant, and declared to her again, as he had affirmed once before, that Manasseh should never become her husband.

The next day, when Manasseh called at the house of Raguel his usual gay manner was changed to sadness, which he accounted for by relating a remarkable and terrible dream, or what he supposed must have been a dream, although he had thought himself to be fully awake at the time. His bedside had been visited by an angry spirit, whether a good or a bad angel he could not judge; but of grand appearance made terrible by anger. The spirit commanded him to annul his claim to the hand of Sara, and never again to seek her presence, or he should assuredly die for his presumption.

Raguel and Edna, remembering that their daughter was beloved by Asmodeus, were alarmed; and Raguel counselled the postponement of the marriage, at least for the present. But this advice caused Manasseh at once to make light of the dream, or apparition, and to seek to persuade both himself and the parents of his betrothed, that his alarm had been groundless, and that he had but dreamt a vain and meaningless dream.

But this view could no longer be entertained when Sara, that same day, informed her father of the re-appearance of Asmodeus in her chamber, and of the words which he had uttered. Yet although it could not be doubted that Manasseh had received warning of the vengeance of the jealous spirit, such was his infatuation, that he preferred to trust to the hope that Asmodeus would be unable to carry out his threat, rather than delay to possess the beautiful though unwilling bride.

Had not Sara now fully believed that she should be delivered from dishonour, death would have become her bridegroom in the stead of the infatuated Hebrew; but, being freed from despair on her own account, she lived on, though all the time troubled and terrified at the expected means of her deliverance.

On the morning of the intended marriage the tragedy was

completed. Manasseh was found dead in his bed, apparently from strangulation.

After these events Sara was slow in recovering strength, and profited but little from the skill and care of her Hebrew physician. At length her father made known to the latter the whole story of his daughter's love for her kinsman at Nineveh; and that she herself was beloved by the demon Asmodeus; when it was advised that she should be taken to Nineveh on a visit to the house of Tobit, as soon as sufficiently recovered to undertake the journey. To hasten her recovery, and deliver her from the intrusions of Asmodeus, the physician prepared a curious charm in the following manner: On the interior surface of a shallow earthen bowl he wrote, in a coil, this incantation in Hebrew characters:

"A remedy from Heaven to take away diseases; to expel demons; to deliver from the night monsters; to secure from the whispering enchanters; and to cast out Satan:

"Behold I make the counsels of the devils of no effect, and annul the power of the ruler of the night monsters. I conjure you all, devils and monsters, and especially Asmodeus, to go forth. I conjure you by the sceptre of the Powerful One, who has given power over the devils and over the night monsters, to cease from troubling the maiden Sara and to quit this habitation. Behold I now make you cease from troubling her, and make the influence of your presence to cease wherever she may be. Receive ye this written authority and go forth; leave quickly, flee, and depart in the name of the living God, by the seal of the Powerful One and by this signet of authority."

This charm was written in a highly medicinal ink. Water being poured into the bowl, the inscription was entirely dissolved, and drunk by the patient. At the same time she was informed by her physician that he had prescribed for her a journey to Nineveh, for change, and that her father had decided to undertake that journey with her, to stay for a few weeks at the house of his kinsman Tobit, so soon as she had recovered sufficient strength to accompany him.

The effect either of the charm or the anticipated journey, was marvellously rapid. The beautiful countenance of the maiden soon assumed an expression of serene happiness; and on the second day she declared herself ready to commence the journey. The charm was again written by the physician on the interior surface of the earthen bowl, to be carried by Sara as an amulet, for her protection by the way, from sickness, from the night monsters, from the whispering enchanters, from the influence of the evil eye, and from the suit of the powerful genie Asmodeus.

Some of these curious charm bowls, with their inscriptions still readable, are to be found to this day among the ruins of the ancient cities of the captivity.

When Raguel applied to the Governor of Media for a pass to Nineveh, he was made the bearer of a despatch to Addin, being in the confidence of the leaders of the conspiracy, and himself one of the chiefs of the Hebrew section of it in Ecbatana. But, as we are writing the story of Sara, rather than a history of the conspiracies of

the Assyrian provinces, we will not concern ourselves with the contents of the Median despatch. That matter will only interest us when the principal forces of the empire-city shall have marched out against rebels in the South and South-east, which will be the signal for the great rising of the Medes in the East.

Having perused the letter from the Median Governor, Addin sat alone meditating at a window which looked towards the approaches of the house. He was just then thinking more of her for whose return he watched, than of the important contents of the despatch which he held in his hand.

Meantime, his friend and mentor had sought Edna, anxious to learn from her the history of her daughter since the time of his brief visit to their house at Ecbatana. Camon was much troubled at the tidings of the death of Manasseh; more especially because that event left Sara open to the sanguine approaches of Addin. Brief consideration determined him to at once seek Raguel, lay before him his fears, and warn him, in the interest of their great secret enterprise, to prevent any future meeting between Sara and her fresh admirer.

But, when Edna shared her husband's counsel in this matter, Camon's endeavours were soon in the way of frustration. Her pride was gratified that one so distinguished among the families of Israel as Prince Addin was likely to become her daughter's suitor in the place of the less brilliant Manasseh. She even tried to persuade herself that Manasseh had been permitted to be removed by Asmodeus, because his claim was opposed to the glorious destiny of Sara as the future Queen of a restored kingdom, and the mother of a race of powerful Kings. She considered, besides, that Sara's heart would now be more docile to this new suit, since even the journey to Nineveh had failed to unite her to her cousin, who had been so long absent and unheard of, that his own mother Anna now daily mourned him as dead. It was this disappointment and dread which had made Sara that day appear so like a beautiful recumbent statue of Sorrow, when seen at the fountain.

Her father Raguel had called, yesterday, at the old home of Tobit by the river Tigris, and learned there of the great change in his affairs and the removal of his household into Nineveh. But although the family had removed from their old home, and it was now the house of Belaaron, sorrowing Anna was at that moment on the housetop looking towards the way of travellers from Carchemish. From her Raguel learned that her husband must have passed him on the way to Rages in Media, and that her son Tobias had been absent so long beyond the time appointed for his return, without any tidings received of him, that she mourned him as the victim of some fatal mishap, although she still looked out daily for some traveller who might confirm the dreadful foreboding.

While Addin watched at the window for the return of Sara and Miriam, they had already reached the house unseen by him, and, through the precautions of Camon and Raguel, the fair maiden was not met by Addin again that evening.

But Edna, engaging the conversation of the young Prince during a

part of the evening, contrived that he should learn what he was most anxious to know respecting Sara, by introducing the subject of the sudden death of Manasseh, dwelling emphatically upon his great disfavour with her daughter, and her consequent sickness at the approach of the time fixed for the nuptials. Had it been permissible for Edna to have lauded the personal beauty of her daughter it would have been needless in the ears of one already enamoured of her charms; but the lover listened, delighted, to the rehearsal of her various brilliant accomplishments, her wisdom, nobility of nature, and her disdain of all suitors, of whom so many had already sought to win her heart. All this was so artfully made known as not to appear the suggestions of maternal partiality, and tended to confirm the opinion which the Prince had already so rashly conceived that Sara was "a queenly damsel and would well become a throne." And now he conceived that her hand was indeed "free to make a King happy."

It may be judged that, under these circumstances, the absence during that evening of the subject of laudation, in no way tended to deliver Addin from the charm which drew his heart towards her. And as he and Camon walked together towards their home the young Prince would think and talk of nothing but the lovely daughter of Raguel.

Then Camon related to him what he had that evening been told of the love and fatal jealousy of Asmodeus. But the extraordinary story produced an effect just contrary to that intended; for, to the infatuation of love, it added a new motive for the suit in the daring mind of Addin. The danger and supposed obstacle made the prize still more attractive, and now he felt even more eager to brave the jealous tyranny of the genie over the beautiful maiden, than to deliver his people from the tyranny of Assyria. His eyes sparkled with unwonted enthusiasm as he mentally embraced the new enterprise, and raising his hand he exclaimed with emphasis:

"Then, Camon, my resolve is fixed. Asmodeus I defy; beautiful Sara shall be delivered, and shall be mine! Is man inferior to the fallen spirits that they should rule his actions, and rob him of his dearest treasures at will?"

"My dear Addin," said Camon, "I implore you to make no passionate resolves. Remember the grand and noble cause which you have already entered upon. Can you stray from it to undertake this new quest without dishonour? Let not the mere beauty of an unhappy maiden overturn all our noble projects and endanger the ultimate deliverance of Israel. Leave her case in the hands of the God of our people."

Addin was pursuing his own thoughts, and had scarcely heard the advice of his friend. "O Camon," said he, "if the genie would but oppose me in mortal form of flesh and blood, I should delight in the prospect of the contest. But even though he should attack me armed with invisibility, and with the hate of hell, would not the good spirits aid me? I confess to you, Camon, that I can even scarcely credit the story which tells that the rebel genii are permitted to tyrannise and triumph over Heaven's favourite creatures."

"But Addin, my dear Prince, O that you could justly claim the special intervention of Heaven in this case! Are you not in this venture rather trusting to your own strength, to accomplish your own rash will?"

Addin made no immediate reply, and Camon continued:

"Now, my dear Prince, let us forget this subject, and discuss the despatch from Media. How much more becoming your courageous heart is the pursuit of our nation's deliverance, with a royal crown in prospect, than a mere love-quest. Come, Addin, banish manfully the image of Sara, and seek no further the ignoble danger of a love-contest with a jealous demon."

"Camon, the word danger itself arouses and establishes my purpose. Sara I love; and shall danger affright me from the possession of her for whom I would willingly risk life itself? I will win the lovely maiden; and then will my arm be even stronger to raise a throne in her native land, that she may adorn it, and enjoy its honours."

Fruitless were all Camon's further arguments and entreaties. To silence him Addin at last confirmed his resolve with a solemn oath, saying:

"I swear by the Temple at Jerusalem, and by Him who sitteth between the Cherubim there, that I will win Sara the daughter of Raguel, or die."

The words fell on the ears of Camon like tidings of a dire misfortune; he turned his troubled countenance to the earth and trembled at the dreadful oath. It was too sacred and binding to admit of retreat.

By the time the two friends had reached their house in the street of the jewellers, Adrammelech, the Assyrian Apollo, had resigned the rule of the eastern hemisphere, and left the lunar goddess to receive the worship of the Ninevites. With prospects and feelings all changed, in so short a space, Addin and Camon sought repose, but found little. Camon's anxiety for his friend kept him in wakeful thought; and love rendered Addin restless and sleepless till near sunrise; when his weary eyelids closed, but the tender passion, still awake, moved his tongue to utterances in the style of the well-remembered language of Solomon, whose love-songs were graven on the hearts of the amorous youth of Israel. Camon was restlessly awaiting the dawn of morning when he heard his friend thus talking in his sleep:

"Thou art fair, my love, thou art fair; thy lips, O my sister, my spouse, drop sweetness like the honeycomb; thy teeth are as a flock of shorn sheep coming up from the pools; thy cheeks are as the rose of Eden, thy forehead is fair as the lilies, thy hair as fine gold: thy breasts, O my beloved, are like young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies; thy breath as fragrant as the breezes that play in a garden of spices: thou art altogether lovely, my sister, my spouse!"

Then, awakened by his own voice, he would turn on his couch with a sigh, and, presently dozing, again take up the song, thus:

“Thou art beautiful, O fair and pleasant art thou, my sister, my spouse ; set me as a seal upon thine heart.”

Again he was aroused by his voice, and the delightful vision which he had been addressing fled. He arose, looked through the casement at the still prevailing night, threw himself again upon his couch, once more yielded to drowsiness, and dreamt that he was seeking his beloved, saying :

“O whither is my beloved gone—the fairest of ten thousand ? Is she gone forth to the gardens to the beds of spices, to pluck the sweet fruits and to gather lilies ? I have called thee, my love, but thou hast given me no answer.”

After this the listener could catch no more distinct articulations, and both the young men sank into a deep sleep until they were aroused by the sound of the chariots drawn by the sacred steeds of the Sun, which conveyed the priests of the Assyrian Apollo, in solemn procession, to the high places, there to offer prayers and sacrifices to the God whose rose-vested herald had just appeared on the eastern horizon. And the young Hebrews arose, not to join in the same worship, but to supplicate the protection of the God of Gods. And earnest were the prayers of Camon for his friend : less earnest the prayers of Addin ; who was guided more by self-confidence, and fearlessness of danger, than by humble reliance of faith in an all-powerful Father.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ADDIN'S DREAM OF THE GENIE AND THE ANGEL : AND CAMON'S INTERPRETATION THEREOF.—SARA VISITS THE SCENE OF THE SEVEN ENCHANTED DAYS.—A TRAVELLER BRINGS TIDINGS OF THE DEATH OF TOBIAS.—LAMENTATIONS.—REMARKS ON CHRISTIANITY.



“**C**E must look well, my Prince, that we sleep not where spies may listen and learn our secrets,” said Camon that morning to his enamoured friend, “for love has caused you to begin to talk in your sleep.”

“Did I indeed speak in my sleep?” replied Addin.

“You bring to mind the dream, in which I must have spoken. I thought I was seeking the beautiful Sara all through the city. Yet it was not Nineveh. It was rather what I should imagine Jerusalem to have been in the days of the great Solomon ; and even more poetical than that. Indeed I seemed, myself, to be a second Solomon, or character represented in his Songs of Love, seeking my beloved in the city, and enquiring for her of all I met, in the language of poetry.”

“And did you find your beloved?” asked Camon.

“I searched all through the city and could not find her ; I then went out at the gate, first enquiring of the watchmen if they had seen my love enter, or go forth. And I sought her without the walls, in most beautiful enchanted places—not like the suburbs of Nineveh, but most beautiful, luxuriant gardens, fragrant with spices and every sweet flower : there I wandered about seeking my beloved. I encompassed the whole city and found her not. Then I began to grieve most bitterly ; but would not yet give up the search, and went further into the paths of the enchanted mazes. All was enchanted—the sky, the sunshine, the sweet air, the flowers and trees, the songs of the birds, and the ground on which I walked. Yet I could not stay to enjoy it without my beloved. As I went on and frequently passed some very attractive beauty among the flowers, or the birds, I thought I would point them out to my love when I had found her. And then I called for her but no voice answered. Silent, again, I passed on. Presently the path became narrower, but the enchantment seemed to increase. Before me, at the termination of the path, I could perceive a widening garden which, from the glimpse I caught of it, excited intense interest. I hastened forward, and there, O happiness ! lay the maiden whom I sought, more beautiful far than I had ever seen her, or pictured her to my fancy in all my wanderings ; there she lay sleeping on a bed of blossoms. And I felt that she was mine.

I stood enraptured and gazed at her heaving bosom strewn with radiant golden tresses, her sweet closed eyelids, her lovely parted lips, and her whole form of exquisite beauty. I stood enraptured awhile, and then stepped nearer, my heart singing the tenderest love song, and stooped to kiss her fair cheek. Then, in an instant, started forth from the shades of a thicket a genie of terrible mien, and approached me like an angry god about to execute judgment. The suddenness of the apparition quite confused and unnerved me; the genie grasped me by the throat, and in the agonies of suffocation I awoke.

“Again I fell asleep; and again dreamt that I was walking through the same narrow path towards the genie-guarded maiden, with distinct remembrance of the former repulse. I thought that anxiety for her safety attracted me thither again, and felt now prepared to cope with the antagonist. So strong was my love that it overcame all fear, and I determined to face the genie boldly. But, just as I arrived at the end of the path, I saw another youth approaching from the opposite side, followed at a short distance by a most glorious being, radiant with celestial light and beauty. I paused, while the youth came forward direct to the maiden, stooped down, and was taking her hand, when the genie rushed forth from the thicket to destroy him. But at that instant the celestial came forward; the genie perceiving him fled in terror, and again I awoke. What think you of these dreams, Camon?”

“I think, my dear Prince, that although dreams are generally the mere play of imagination run wild during the sleep of judgment, yet this dream of yours should be otherwise regarded. We know that sometimes divine revelations and warnings are communicated in the visions of the night: and thus have you received a divine warning with a merciful purpose easy to interpret. You were approaching the maiden Sara, and found her guarded by the genie Asmodeus; to withstand whom you were powerless, like Manasseh, and were sharing his fate when you awoke. This is to warn you that no mortal arm can withstand the jealous Asmodeus. The second part of your dream revealed how the maiden might be won, in spite of the power and jealousy of the genie. The youth who approached to claim her being protected by an angel of God, could not be thwarted nor hurt.”

The countenance of Camon now glowed as with inspiration, and, raising his hand, he said:

“And now, O my Prince, your dream causes me to tremble as well as to rejoice. I tremble at this evident warning from Heaven, that, unaided, you cannot escape from the fatal rage of Asmodeus, in claiming Sara for your bride, which you have sworn to do. But I rejoice that Heaven has so graciously warned you, in time, of this danger; and pointed out that the maiden’s husband may be so attended by an angel of Heaven, that the rage and jealousy of the demon shall be harmless. And now, for the sake of Israel, for the sake of your own happiness in this maiden, for the sake of your life, so precious to a captive nation awaiting deliverance, let me implore you to seek and obtain the special guardianship of that holy angel; that he may not only guide you in safety to the bosom of the fair

maiden whom you have sworn to claim, but, also, triumphantly to the throne of Israel. Important indeed is the warning of your dream, O my dear friend and Prince, for it shewed that in seeking Sara no guardian angel attended you, and you were abandoned to the power of the genie; and so Heaven, at present, aids not your enterprise. And now do I tremble more for fear that the God of Israel may not be with us in our efforts to liberate His afflicted people; and without His aid how can so great a work succeed? Shall we not, rather, by an unsuccessful rising, add to the afflictions and enthraldom of Israel? Let us at once, then, humble our hearts before God, and cease not to implore His aid, until we have the assurance that He is with us, and will send His holy angels to fight our battles."

"I thank you, my dear friend," replied Addin, "for your love and zeal on my behalf, and will consider your words." But the words of Camon were, to use a sacred simile, as seed cast upon stony places, which, although it germinate quickly, and give promise of fruit, is soon withered for want of root.

That same morning Sara accompanied her father to the old residence of Tobit opposite the Gate of Triumph. She wished to indulge the tender sorrow of viewing oncemore the scenes where her love had been won, and tracing those paths which she had trodden in company with her beloved cousin.

Her previous visit to these scenes, years ago, was in the early Spring, when the fields were robed in tender green, and the orchards in delicate blossoms of pink and white; while the wilderness was richly adorned and perfumed with the blooming hyacinth, the violet, the narcissus, the tulip, and many other early flowers. All was then in harmony with the hearts of the betrothed children—full of freshness, hope and gushing joy. Now it was somewhat changed; and the experiences of the lovely beholder had not accorded with the progress of the change. It was Summer, and the Spring promise of the tender green of the fields was fulfilled, in that marvellously fruitful land, as it had been several times since, in an abundant golden harvest ready for the sickle; the promise of the blossomed orchards being realized in a generous yield of rich and glorious fruit. The mantle of the wilderness was changed, but it was still beautiful in its season, and the air sounded joyous with the hum of bees who were busy gathering their stores of sweetness; so that, presently, the rocks should drop honey. But the hopes of the early Spring-time of the young lovers had not yet, likewise, ripened into sweet fruition.

Sara could still recognise the spot where they used to sit to rest themselves after the happy rambles of those seven enchanted days. The place was sacred in her esteem, and she kissed the diapered earth and pressed her bosom to it and watered it with her tears. For there they had sat together when she listened to his first simple avowal of love, and promise of never-failing constancy; that promise on which she had so confidently and trustingly depended ever since. And there she had poured into his enraptured ears the Story of the True Love of Prince Meshad, her lips, indeed, "dropping sweetness like the honeycomb."

Was she never to realize the holy happiness which is the due reward of virtuous and constant love? Was he who had rendered this spot so fruitful of dear recollections really dead and lost to her for life? She questioned Heaven in prayer, and her heart responded that she might yet hope. Hers was ever a hopeful heart, but she wept again at the dread uncertainty.

She rambled about for some hours indulging that soothing bitter-sweet sorrow, which is known only to the hearts of the constant when they visit those sacred places where lay at rest the remains of beloved ones; and where all their life's joys and hopes seem to lie buried. Yet Sara was not, as we have said, entirely without hope. She endured the sorrow of bereavement, yet did not fully realise the idea that Tobias was finally lost to her. She was therefore unprepared for the heavy tidings which she was soon to hear.

While Anna, at the same time, was watching towards the Southwest from her bower on the house-top, hoping even yet to discover her son approaching along the road from Carchemish, she discerned in the distance a solitary traveller, whom she could recognise as one of her own nation. It was her custom to send forth a servant to question all the numerous travellers who approached, as to whether they had heard any tidings of the son of the chief Purveyor. But it was seldom, in those days, that Hebrews came that way, and she sent to invite the traveller into the house to rest and refresh himself.

Now this traveller happened to be the very messenger—a free Benjamite—whom Addin had found secret means to despatch to Jerusalem about two years before, with a letter to King Hezekiah. He was therefore exceedingly cautious in answering questions as to his journey, knowing the danger of the discovery of its secret by the Assyrians. But when he found that it was Anna, the mother of Tobias, who interrogated him, he told her that he had indeed news for her, of which he was the most sorrowful and unwilling bearer. That the tidings, however, would be best told by a letter which he held, written by Abner, the Benjamite, of Jerusalem, to Tobit, the Naphtalian, of Nineveh. Tobit being absent in Media, the traveller handed the letter to Anna, who, severing its sealed band with trembling hands, passed the scrip to Raguel, that he might read its contents to her. At that moment Sara returned, and became an agitated listener when she learned that the letter was concerning Tobias. And these were the contents of the letter:

“Abner, the son of Jonathan, the Benjamite, of the city of Jerusalem, to Tobit, the son of Tobiel, the Naphtalian, of the city of Nineveh, sendeth greeting.

“The sight of thy noble son, and the tidings of thy prosperity gave me great joy. So will I mourn with thee, dear friend of my youth, in thy day of sorrow.

“Let my brother trust in the God of Israel, who giveth and taketh according to His divine will and wisdom. He permitteth affliction to those whom He loveth, for their advantage. For said not our Royal Sage, ‘despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of His correction; for whom the Lord loveth He correcteth.’

"Surely, my brother, thou art already fortified with resignation to the mysterious decrees of Heaven.

"I write with a heavy heart, and with many tears of sorrow. But better is it that we know the extent of the evil that may have befallen us, that we may become resigned, than wait in the anguish of dread, and of daily disappointed hope.

"Know, my brother, that our good and righteous King Hezekiah is very zealous for the Lord; and his servants have been very diligent to purge the land of all heresy, and contempt of our holy religion; that the threatened judgments of the God of Israel may be averted from the remnant of the chosen people.

"Yet I believe that thy son was a good youth, and that his judge was misled by over-zealous accusers."

While Raguel was reading thus far, Anna was evidently in most pitiable suspense. She understood only those expressions which hinted at her son's death. The writer's exhortation to patience only increased the agony of her impatience. And now, unable to restrain her sorrow any longer, she exclaimed:

"Oh, my son! my son!" wrung her hands, and wept bitterly. Sara also had grown deadly pale, and listened with suppressed agony; but she spoke not, and listened calmly while her father continued to read:

"Let me now inform thee of his accusation, and how it was brought about.

"After witnessing the execution of a Sabbath-breaker, in the manner prescribed by our holy laws, thy son was overheard to say that he thought the judges of Judah were too severe in their interpretation of the laws of God, declaring that the God of Israel is rather a God of mercy than of terror. I sorrow greatly that words of youthful indiscretion should have been witnessed against the lad to his condemnation.

"Also it was witnessed that during the journey from Nineveh thy son had formed loving companionship with one of the false Levites sent by the King of Assyria to teach at Bethel. This man was heard at Samaria to utter blasphemies against our holy books, and it was believed that thy son had assented to this blasphemy.

"Further, it was charged against thy son and the false Levite (who had secretly entered Jerusalem) that they remained in the city as spies of the King of Assyria, which suspicion was confirmed in the mind of the Judge when it became known, by thy son's confession, what favour and exaltation thou hadst met at the Court of Nineveh.

"The evidence on all these charges appeared so strong, that it was impossible to save the lad. There was even danger that my own son would have shared the same fate, because of his companionship with Tobias, had he not in time hidden himself from the accusers. Yet did he at first venture into the Court of Judgment, with intent to befriend the accused by his evidence, and only fled when he saw there was danger of his own arrest as an accomplice. The bearer of this letter, also, was present, and remained in the Court of Judgment until he heard the Judge pronounce the sentence 'Thou hast merited death, and shalt die for thy avowed contempt of God's law and its

administrators,' when he left the Court and brought us the dreadful tidings, which from that hour to the present have made my house a house of mourning."

Here Raguel ceased to read, although there was more written, for poor afflicted Anna had covered her face, and was sobbing convulsively. She had before given up her son as lost; yet not without a feeble clinging to hope. Now all her past sorrow was harrowed up afresh, and despair confirmed.

But Sara, although she had nobly struggled against the demonstration of her grief, was suffering more even than Anna. At this climax of the terrible story she could no longer control herself. A whirling tempest seemed to be arising in her mind, confusing all her faculties and perceptions, and she was conscious only of an indescribable horror creeping through her heart and brain.

"O my father, save me!" she exclaimed, clinging tenaciously to Raguel. The mental tempest was raging furiously. The world seemed to be sinking from under her feet, and all about her breaking up, and she felt to want something to grasp. Consciousness was only horror, until insensibility succeeded the terrible anguish, and her father sustained her, apparently lifeless, in his arms.

It was some time before Sara aroused as from a troubled agonising dream, and found herself reclining, very feeble, upon a couch, attended by her anxious father, by the daughter of Belaaron, and by Anna, who now clung to the daughter of Raguel as the one who could best sympathise with her own deep sorrow. When Sara remembered the cause of her swoon she again wept bitterly, while her father tried to comfort her, saying, as he bent over her:

"Yield no longer to this sorrow, my dear child; but remember that your grief is no exception to the general experience of mankind. You are but proving, even now, one of the inevitable experiences of life; you are awaking to pain it is true, but you are at the same time merely awaking from a delusive dream of happiness. The ways of Providence are indeed mysterious, and, to us, inexplicable. The just and the unjust are equally liable to such disappointments of youthful hopes. Indeed the general experience of life, in every instance, more or less, is disappointment and sorrow. Especially are the dreams, and faiths, and hopes of youth, seldom, if ever, realized. Yet the just may look forward with hope and certain faith to a more agreeable experience in a future life; while the wicked reap bitterness in the present and in the future. I have deemed thee a wise maiden, my dear child, and if thou art wise thou wilt yet find such happiness as is permitted to mankind in submitting patiently to the decrees of God. Restrain thy sorrow and seek that measure of calm peace which Heaven permits to the patient."

Raguel then left his daughter in the care of Anna, and proceeded with the Benjamite traveller in search of Prince Addin.

As soon as Anna found herself alone with Sara, she embraced the weeping maiden with much affection, and said:

"Now do I know that thou wert worthy of my dear son's love. Ah, my noble boy, and well worthy was he of thy tears. Let men

talk of patience at such a time, who know not the depth of a woman's heart ; but rather let us continue our lamentations, for he was a true and noble boy, and yearned after thee, my daughter, with a very great and constant love."

Then, when they had mingled their tears awhile, Anna related to Sara how Tobias had mourned her departure into Media, and was only comforted by the faith that he should ultimately be united to her. How totally insensible was his heart to the beauty of all other women, and his love unabated by the allurements of wealth, and the dazzling attractions of the Court of Nineveh, when his father became the favourite of the great King. How he had besought his father to allow him to travel into Media, to seek his cousin ; and how at length, when, by his father's command, he was compelled to undertake that fatal journey to Jerusalem, he was only reconciled to obedience by the belief that his prayers, offered at the Temple itself, for the fulfilment of the great desire of his heart, would meet immediate acceptance, and cause him to be divinely guided to the object of his love.

When Sara heard of these things, and was thereby fully assured of the constancy of her beloved cousin, her sorrow was more intense than ever at the cruel fate which had thwarted so much anticipated happiness ; for she was now made more completely aware of the extent of her loss. And when, having recovered her calmness, she was left to herself to repose, and to indulge her own undisturbed thoughts, she mentally exclaimed :

"O my beloved, now do I know without doubt that you would have redeemed your promise to me ; in this sad hour it is confirmed that you were worthy of my faith and my constant love. And, O my beloved ! if thy spirit is near me, and can hear me, hear the renewed assurance of my undying fidelity to thee. I am still thine, and still thine will I live and die, that I may be worthy to be thy sister and spouse in Heaven ! And, O God of Israel, Friend and Support of the feeble, deliver me from the greed of men. Incline the heart of my father to spare me from dishonour, that my soul be not tempted, in flying from the grasp of the pursuer, to rush prematurely and unbidden into the presence of Thy awful Judgment Seat."

But while Tobias was being thus mourned as dead, he was yet living imprisoned in the fortress at Jerusalem. The Benjamite messenger had not stayed long enough in the Hall of Judgment to hear completed the sentence which remanded Tobias to prison as an Assyrian spy, instead of condemning him to death as a Hebrew despiser of the law.

Not only was Tobias still living, but, as we have seen, he had experienced in the solitude of his imprisonment that marvellous regeneration which was productive of the highest happiness of which the human soul is capable, until it shall enter upon its full inheritance of bliss. It was that same regeneration and holy happiness which has since enabled the Christian martyrs to endure calmly and triumphantly the tortures of cruelly devised deaths, rather than deny its reality.

And let it not be supposed that the serene and happy condition of

heart which is the experience of the true Christian was unknown to mankind before the Christian era. Since the first creation of man it was ever the proper condition of that soul which had attained its preparation to return to its inheritance. It is the restoration in the heart of that divine Love which makes angels what they are, and Heaven what it is.

Perhaps, indeed, that condition of heart was uncommon in those days, and in advance of the best doctrines of the time. So, perhaps, is it uncommon, even now, although since then proclaimed by the Son of God as the regeneration for which mankind is created, and which all may enjoy; and even though constantly preached for eighteen hundred years, and accepted as the established doctrine of the majority of nations. Among the many millions with whom Christianity is the fashionable profession, how comparatively few, even yet, experience and practice the divinely simple faith!

Its experience is the overthrow of pride, selfishness, and retaliation; yet how small a proportion are free from pride, selfishness, and the desire of retaliation; loving all men, even their enemies; loving their neighbours as themselves; returning good for evil; preferring that their good deeds be unknown to men, for fear of the pride of human approbation; sharing their substance unstintingly with needy brethren; regarding this life only as a progress towards a heavenly and everlasting existence; really, and not cantingly, longing for the day which shall free their spirits from shackles of flesh, and yearning to be with the Prince of Love; thus laying up treasure in Heaven as their lasting abiding-place, and content to keep their bank pass-book in their bosoms, rather than hoarding treasure on the road-side of their terrestrial pilgrimage. How rare, and beautiful in the eyes of all is a true Christian!

CHAPTER XXVII.

RAGUEL AND HIS FAMILY START TO RETURN TO ECBATANA.—THEY ARE INTERCEPTED, AND SARA IS CARRIED AWAY TO THE PALACE OF PRINCE ADRAMMELECH.—INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE PRINCE AND HIS CAPTIVE.—DESCRIPTION OF THE HALL OF LOVE.—THE SUDDEN APPARITION OF ASMODEUS THERE, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.



THE increasing sickness of the King of Assyria would alone have been sufficient warning to Addin and Camon to hold themselves in readiness to depart again, with their treasures, to the capital of Media, to await there the tidings of the King's death—the signal for the Median revolt. The purpose of their return to Nineveh was already accomplished; and the wealthy among the Hebrew captives had, by the advice of their Prince, converted most of their possessions into treasure of small compass, that they also might be ready for an exodus, in case Media should at an early day succeed in holding open the gates of Nineveh for their escape as a nation. But Prince Addin had now another inducement to hasten his departure from Nineveh, since Raguel and his family were about to start for Ecbatana; and Addin looked forward to winning the heart and hand of Sara during that journey, in which they were to form one party.

Neither Raguel nor Camon any longer opposed the suit of Addin, for both admitted that the solemn oath which he had sworn, to win Sara, or die in the attempt, might not be disregarded. Therefore all were now allied to Edna in her ambitious endeavour to induce her daughter to accept the Prince for her lover; and were not without hope that time, and the opportunities which the journey to Ecbatana would present for the attentions and pleadings of the noble and handsome lover, would enable him to win her, especially now that the previous object of her obstinate love was presumably dead, and that tie apparently dissolved.

But, at present, Sara's heart continued so unyielding, that, when pressed by her mother to accept this new suitor, she prayed her father Raguel to have pity on her, and take her back at once to Ecbatana, that she might escape the attentions of Addin, and her mother's arguments in his favour, so distasteful to her mourning heart. To which he replied:

"We shall immediately leave this city for Ecbatana, my dear child, but not to avoid the society of the Prince of Israel; for he and his friend Camon will accompany us, and be the protection of our

journey. And why should his love distress you? He is the most noble of our people; and it is the belief and trust of the elders of Israel, throughout all the provinces of their captivity, that God has raised him up as a second David, to deliver us from our enemies, and to establish us again as a great and independent kingdom. Why should you wish to escape from that love which must make you the Princess, and the envy, of all the daughters of our people?"

"O my father!" exclaimed Sara, but she could not proceed for weeping.

Raguel kissed and embraced her, and bade her be patient, and seek comfort, rather than indulge inordinate sorrow for the dead; for persistent mourning might almost be interpreted into peevishness with God, and rebellion against the decrees of His Providence. "But time alone, my dear daughter, will soon heal your heart. Be patient and obedient, and all will yet be well with you. I do not command you immediately to accept the hand of the Prince; but I do command you not so to reject him, that he shall be induced to abandon his suit, without hope of ever obtaining your love."

A few days after this Raguel and his family had taken leave of their friends and kindred in Nineveh, and were walking towards the gate which opened in the direction of distant Ecbatana. It was their intention to walk on the way as far as the first Khan; wait there for Addin and Camon to join them; and then purchase mules for the journey. For whilst often living luxuriously, and even magnificently, in the privacy of their houses, the captive Israelites ever carried themselves humbly in the sight of the Assyrians, to avoid insult; and although the influence of Tobit and Achiacharus at Court was a great protection to them from open outrage, they were still generally despised as a captive and heretic people.

Sara had been closely veiled during the walk through the city; but, when they were passing one of the magnificent royal palaces, she removed her veil for a few moments, that she might more distinctly view the grand structure, and was herself observed by one, himself unseen, whose licentious gaze dwelt greedily on her beautiful countenance and form. This circumstance produced no immediate consequence, and the travellers, unconscious of impending evil, proceeded on their way. But when they had traversed about two miles beyond the walls they heard behind them the sound of an approaching chariot; and, as it drew near, stepped aside from the road till it should pass. Great was their amazement when the charioteer stopped his horses beside the group, and an armed soldier of youthful appearance, in the uniform of the guards of the palace, descending, approached Sara, and said that one whose command none dare disobey had sent for her to his presence. Sara shrank back from him, and he added: "Not for harm, fair maiden, but for favour and honour does my master command your presence."

Sara clung to her father, speechless; and he, replying to the soldier, said: "You are mistaken; my daughter is not the person you seek; we are poor Hebrew travellers in whom your master, whoever he may be, can have no interest."

The soldier made no further reply ; but taking Sara in his powerful arms, lifted her, shrieking, into the chariot. Raguel, and even Edna, and the maid Miriam, struggled to impede the young warrior ; but he shook them all off without effort, and supporting his swooning burden in the chariot, ordered the driver to return to the palace.

Since the return of King Shalmanezar from the conquest of Samaria such public violence could not have been attempted with impunity, and had been rare in Nineveh, until now that the King lay on a bed of fatal sickness, justice was less vigilant ; and Prince Adrammelech, knowing the contempt and anger of his father Sennacherib against the Hebrews, dared thus, in open daylight, and on the public highway, himself in the disguise of one of his guards, to seize the daughter of Raguel, and carry her into his licentious palace.

While Raguel, Edna, and Miriam—the two latter weeping frantically—were returning towards the gate of the city, the chariot, leaving them far behind, entered the court of the palace, which was at present the residence of Prince Adrammelech ; and Sara, too feeble with terror even to utter a cry, was carried into an inner apartment. There the disguised Prince, kissing her forehead, left her in the care of an old female slave, who understood his purpose, and what was expected of her.

And now Sara wept freely ; and, finding herself torn from all human aid, prayed to the God of her people to deliver her from her ravisher. The old slave tried to soothe her, and bade her be comforted, for that she had nothing more to fear now that the shock of her capture was over ; but must begin to anticipate many delights such as she had probably never before conceived, since hers was the good fortune to have inspired the heart of a great Prince with love. “Such love,” said she, “as must make you his chief favourite, and the envy of all the women of his palace ; for not one among them can boast that her Prince took so much trouble to obtain her as he has taken to possess you.” The old slave, who had been the nurse of Prince Adrammelech, then fetched some rich and costly garments, with which she endeavoured to persuade the captive to replace her travelling attire, that she might be in readiness to receive the Prince when he should presently return in his proper robes. But Sara spurned them from her, and throwing herself upon the couch where the Prince had placed her, she wept and prayed again that she might be restored to her father ; or that death might deliver her from this new peril. But the freer the flow of tears, the sooner is the fount dry ; even sorrow is temporarily exhausted by overmuch indulgence ; and calm ever succeeds the mental tempest. Therefore, at length, Sara had ceased to weep, and was sitting upon the couch, pondering calmly on her perilous position, when Prince Adrammelech re-entered the apartment, attired in his royal robes. He looked surprised that the captive had not also been re-attired according to his command ; but needed not the explanation of the old nurse when he glanced at the scattered garments, and the stern and tear-marked countenance of the maiden. He had not been accustomed to such indifference—nay, even bold resistance, on the part of those whom

he had condescended to woo ; and the sight of this noble maiden, so peculiarly beautiful in her stern sorrow, and not less interesting to him because still attired in the simple and graceful costume of her people, gave a new zest and impetus to his passion for her. Without hearing to an end the excuses of the old nurse, he motioned her to retire, and seated himself on the couch beside Sara ; who, however, instantly rose and stood before him.

“Nay, my fair one,” said Adrammelech, “be seated, and look not so sternly alarmed at the approach of a Prince who comes to declare to you his ardent love.”

“If you are a Prince,” said she, “I pray you to protect, and not to insult, a defenceless maiden who has been shamefully forced from her parents and dragged into this place. Surely I should now be safe from further outrage, in a royal palace of Nineveh, since my unwilling presence in it is not unknown to one of its Princes.”

“What mean you by outrage, fair maiden ? And as to protection, think you not that my love will be sufficient to shield you from all harm ?”

“I pray you speak not of love ; my heart is indeed past all allurement. But O restore me at once to my father, and I will indeed be grateful.”

Adrammelech gazed upon her with increased admiration, and said “Nay ; having discovered so precious a jewel in the highway, surely I will not, like a fool, throw it back into the mire ; but will preserve it jealously as the rarest treasure of my palace.”

While he yet spoke he stretched forth his hand to seize her by her garments, but she suddenly drew back a few paces, exclaiming, “Prince, beware ! I am protected by a God who will avenge force against my person with instant death.”

Without rising to follow his purpose the Prince contented himself with feasting his eyes upon the beautiful figure before him, roused to a majestic dignity which he had never before witnessed in her sex. Her left hand was stretched forth to repel, and her right was thrust through a fold of her dress, just beneath her beautiful bosom. He guessed not that it rested upon the hilt of a dagger which she would have drawn and plunged into his heart, in the last necessity, in defence of her honour.

Whether it was the influence of her own chaste will, or fear of the vengeance of the God whose special protection she professed, or both combined, Adrammelech was certainly awed in the presence of this captive of a despised nation. But he allowed not his countenance to betray the feeling. If fear of the Gods had any influence upon him on this occasion, he must have become more incredulous of their vengeance at a later day, when he and his brother Sharezer committed a most impious deed in the very temple of Nisroch.

“Noblest and most beautiful of maidens,” said Adrammelech, smiling, “fear not a Prince of Assyria, whose love alone is sufficient to protect you even from its own ardour, while it is your will to repel him. But think not that I will abandon a prize so precious as yourself. I will win you by my patient love, and you shall yet yield me

the compass of your fair arms, and the repose of your glorious bosom for my paradise. But fear me not ; though it is a conquest more to my mind than that of Jerusalem, it shall not be accomplished by storm ; but freely yielded, after a siege of love, by your own capitulation."

"The God of Israel deliver me !" exclaimed she.

"Meantime," resumed the Prince, rising, "thou canst not refuse me one parting kiss upon thy fair forehead." But, before he had attempted it, the old nurse was knocking loudly upon the door through which she had retired, and having the Prince's command to enter, informed him that a horseman had just arrived at full speed with a message from Prince Sennacherib, commanding the immediate presence of his son Adrammelech at the palace of the sick King.

The Prince had been expecting such a summons ; for it was not expected that the King could live through the day. Indeed he would have anticipated this message, and have been at the palace of the King long ago, had not this lawless adventure detained him from his duty.

Leaving Sara in the charge of the old nurse, with instructions to attend her with studious care, and to permit none other to have access to her until his return, Prince Adrammelech withdrew.

And now Sara, having thus far succeeded in escaping the touch of her licentious ravisher, ascribed her present deliverance to God, and gained increased faith in her ultimate safe escape from the palace. She was even so far restored to calm patience that she was induced by the claims of hunger to select some fruit from a repast which was placed before her by her assiduous attendant, carefully avoiding what the Israelites termed the "bread of the Gentiles." But she still persistently refused to change her Hebrew garments for the rich Assyrian robes which she was urged to assume. While she was eating, soft mournful music, softer yet from the effect of distance, stole upon her ears with soothing and sympathetic influence. The slave now drew aside some heavy curtains of tapestry which had closed one end of the apartment, and let in more distinctly the sweet sounds, still softened by distance, and the performers still unseen. The room was agreeably freshened by the cool air that came wafting through the wide opening, carrying with it the fragrance of flowers and the murmurs of falling waters. The apartment in which she sat was gorgeous with rich tapestries, carved cedar, and gilded-work ; but that which was thus opened to view claimed still more interested attention.

The roof was flat, and composed of open trellis-work, which sustained all over its outer surface the tender foliage of various trailing plants whose flowers, trained with care, drooped in varied rich clusters and festoons into the midst of the apartment, the whole producing a perfumed, cool, and airy shade. The pavement was elaborately composed of tessera of tinted stones, flattened and polished at great cost, and arranged in curious devices. At one end of the apartment was erected a dais, reached by three steps, carpeted with tapestry of the finest workmanship of Babylon, and of the

richest dyes of Tyre ; and on the dais was erected a double throne, canopied with cloth of gold, for the accommodation of the Prince and of his queen of love and beauty for the time being, whenever it should be his pleasure to hold festival there. At the other end played a fountain, and all around the hall were ranged cushions for the convenience of the revellers. The walls were formed of large slabs of alabaster, filling spaces between elegant gilded columns, each alternate slab being sculptured with scenes of love, and bacchanalian festivity, and the intervals hung with trophies of musical instruments, ready to be awakened into melody in aid of the loud revel. But now the chords of the harp, the dulcimer, and psaltery, only gave forth sweet Eolian whispers in faint echo to the distant music, or at the slightest vibration of the air from breeze, or step, or voice.

Here, finding the place completely solitary, Sara paced to and fro meditating on her alarming situation ; but, with firm faith, waiting her deliverance.

When she had traversed the whole length of the solitary bower two or three times, and once more turned to re-trace her steps, she was surprised and startled to find Asmodeus standing before her in his familiar character of Nathan the Hebrew merchant. His countenance and low obeisance expressed deep reverence, and Sara, recovering her courage, said :

“Is it *thou* then who in thy false guises art again my persecutor? I had thought myself the prisoner of a Prince of Assyria ; but, whether in that new character, or in thy present, I fear thee not. My trust is in the God of Israel, who will deliver me.”

“Mistake not, fairest of the daughters of Adam,” he replied, “I am not thy persecutor ; nor am I he who sued thee as the son of Sennacherib. I come, instead, as thy deliverer from that bold Prince, who with his own rude hands bore thee from thy parents to this palace. Fear me not, noble maiden, but learn to know me as thy ever watchful guard, who, although thy slave, is powerful to deliver thee from the mightiest of Princes, as readily as from the presumptuous Manasseh.”

“I doubt thee, Nathan,” she answered, “and will not accept thy aid. It is within the range of thy cunning to have ordained my capture, that thou mightest afterwards claim the gratitude due to a deliverer.”

“Thy words are harsh, and thy suspicions groundless,” said Asmodeus in an altered sad tone, “yet thou canst not offend me. Had I been thy captor my powerful love had provided thee a palace far more splendid than this ; where thou shouldst have been the acknowledged and acclaimed Queen, not the secreted mistress. But when I lead thee there it shall not be by forcible capture, after the example of the rude mortal who, in vain, has seized thee to-day ; but thou shalt be there by thine own choice, yielded to my untiring love and reverence of thy surpassing wisdom and beauty.”

“Meantime, get thee away quickly,” said Sara. “It is not seemly that I listen to thy words, and thereby encourage thy perfectly vain hopes. Be assured that, not to be the sole and immortal Empress of

those regions over which the heathen assert that the God Pluto rules, would I become thy Proserpine ; not even to reign for ever in that fabled Elysium whose palaces, designed by Gods, are said to be constructed of gold, and pearls, and other precious stones."

"Yet, be thou equally assured, noble Sara, will I no less deserve thy love and gratitude ; although they be withheld for ever. And now, as to my more immediate purpose here, if thou wilt not yet consent to rule in a palace worthy of a goddess, and of thee, because Asmodeus would be among thy subjects there, yet let me at least restore thee from this prison to the charge of thy sorrowing parents. Command me, I am thy slave."

The maiden hesitated for a moment. She yearned to relieve her father's sorrow. She longed also for liberty, and deliverance from the dangers of that wicked place—from a contest dreaded, in spite of her confidence of ultimate escape. But she hesitated only a moment, and replied,

"Begone, Asmodeus ; my trust is in other aid."

In a direction where Sara could discern nothing but empty space, the genie gazed with marked fear, as though looking upon an enemy whom he had no power to resist—and fled.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PALACE OF ASMODEUS BENEATH MOUNT ARARAT.
—ITS PRINCE TAKES COUNSEL THERE, AND FORMS NEW RESOLVES.



WITH the mad misery of strong hopeless love, and jealousy of his mortal rival, who, he knew, yet lived, Asmodeus hastened from the habitations and walks of men, as though fleeing from that world where he had caught so virulent a disorder.

We have before said that Asmodeus was a Prince among the genii, and that his vast palace was beneath the foundations of the mountains of Ararat. Thitherward he now sped. Alighting at a small cavity in the side of a mountain, where one of his immortal guards kept watch, he passed in. Human presence could not have accompanied him there, and human imagination can only faintly grasp the tremendous scene.

The gloomy way to his palace winded downwards until the genie passed beneath the granite foundations of the earth's crust. Then the vast passage, immensely lofty, was illumined by a brilliant rivulet of burning lava, which whirled and foamed among blocks of adamant, and made a noise as of cool rushing waters. Sometimes the sounds increased to a terrific din when the torrent plunged in cascades of fire into awful depths, to be overtaken again, presently, quietly meandering with the soft murmur of terrestrial water-brooks. For the uneven path through the long cavern followed the course of this brilliant river of liquid fire. It was one of the vast Plutonic passages through which the terrific internal forces of the earth rush from the birthplaces of earthquakes to upheave or submerge the upper continents and islands. The course and direction of such passages is sometimes marked on the earth's surface across whole countries, by long ranges of mountains upheaved in the original formation of these Plutonic tunnels.

So lofty was the sinuous vault that although its fretted sides were grandly revealed, crusted with molten gold, and sparkling with various other metals and crystalizations, and a glimmer was thrown into deep yawning caverns on either side, yet darkness bounded the view above as though it were overhung by infinite night.

Grand as was this passage to the palace of Asmodeus, it was but a worthy approach to the vast cavity beneath the foundations of Mount Ararat. It is impossible to awaken in the mind a just conception of

the immense dome, once a great arsenal of active volcanic forces. Cataracts of fire rushed down from terraces above, at intervals, around its distant limits, sufficient to light up brilliantly even that immense void, revealing countless stalactites of gold and melted felspar, or jade, which had trickled through the granite roof; some even reaching like enormous pillars to the floor, which was all of beaten gold. Also huge basaltic columns gave lurid reflections, and irregular arches of vast expanse were gilded, and revealed, by the light from the burning torrents; while in some parts of the rugged walls shone prismatic splendours pleasingly changeful at every turn. But we will not attempt further to describe this unimaginably grand Plutonic palace, where Asmodeus in vain sought refuge from the pains of his unrequited love-passion, and impotent jealousy.

The genii of the palace drew back, and turned their gaze to the earth in respectful silence, when their Prince passed among them towards his accustomed seat, with care and disappointment stamped upon his brow.

And there he sat unrelieved of his torments, and pondered long in silence.

At length the silence was broken by a genie whose rank in that palace was next to that of Asmodeus himself. He was in the confidence of his chief, and was the same who had personated the old jeweller at the Hall of Music in Carchemish, when it was sought to tempt Tobias from his fidelity to the daughter of Raguel.

"My lord," said he, "is thy servant permitted to speak?"

"Speak, Damish," consented Asmodeus.

"Why, then, O my lord, should the indifference of a wilful daughter of the mortals continue to disturb the peace of a great Prince of the eternal genii? Remember, O my Prince, that were the maiden thine, she is still but mortal, and could only be briefly worn as a plucked flower. For so, in a few days must her beauty fade, and her charms disappear for ever. Try to suppose, therefore, O my Prince, that thou hast possessed her already, and image her to thy fancy as a faded charmless woman, like those thou hast loved in long past generations. Let not the loss of a pleasure so brief occasion my lord sadness."

"Damish," replied Asmodeus, "thou hast spoken wisely; yet can I take no comfort from thy words. I must yet love the Hebrew maiden with increasing desire, for it is not in my power to subdue the passion. Indeed I remain the prey of two fierce flames—hopeless love and unavengeable hatred. For although she believes her lover to have been slain in Jerusalem, he still lives; and she will hold herself sacred to his mere memory, until he is restored to her fair bosom to enjoy that bliss which is denied to a pining god."

"Yet why hopeless love, my lord, if thou *must* still love? While a daughter of Eve hath freewill, surely thou mayst hope to gain her favour, and thereby, too, revenge thyself upon thy rival."

"Damish, so thought I, vainly. Have I not put forth all my seductive powers—I who never before failed of conquest in such an encounter? Yet am I this day still a spurned suitor. What form of manhood could be more pleasing to a Hebrew maiden than that

which I have assumed to win her fancy? What language of real passion could I have used more eloquent to awaken the sympathy of love? What reverent courtesy more complete to gratify her vanity? And what gifts could I have offered more desirable to female taste to awaken her gratitude? And even now, again, have I been driven from her presence, where she is held in captivity by the son of Sennacherib; even when I offered to deliver her from her hated captor, and either to make her the acknowledged Queen of a palace infinitely more splendid than that of earthly Kings, or restore her direct to her parents from whom she had been torn. Yet would she not suffer my presence, nor accept my services, even as her slave."

"Yet I cannot suppose, my lord, that even this stubborn mortal could refuse to be mistress of such a palace as your servants would instantly erect at your nod of command, could we but once enclose her within its walls and make her to realize her ownership of its splendours, its wealth, and its services."

A brief silence ensued while Asmodeus seemed to ponder on the words of Damish. At length the chief said:

"Nathan has failed to win her love, and Nathan shall sue her no more. Yet will not Asmodeus despair. I approve thy suggestion, Damish, and will test thy counsel. Sara shall find herself the mistress of a rich palace, and when she, at leisure, learns who is its lord she shall find in him a form even more lovable than that of the oft-rejected Nathan. Thou knowest, Damish, that I prolonged that character that she might, in time, yield to the perseverance of patient love. But now I see a more hopeful course. Surely her belief in her favoured lover's death will remove a mountain from the path of my success."

Once more, raised from despondency, Asmodeus smiled upon the surrounding genii, and dispelled the gloom which had accompanied his presence in the palace.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE RETURN OF THE PURVEYOR FROM MEDIA.—HE ATTENDS THE DYING KING OF ASSYRIA, AND OBTAINS THE LIBERATION OF SARA.



MEANTIME Raguel, as he returned towards the gate, pondering what course he should pursue for the recovery of his daughter, concluded to go direct to the house of Tobit and consult with Achiacharus. He rightly judged that the author of the outrage must be one very high in position ; not only from the boldness of the act, and the employment of a royal guard and chariot in its execution, but also from the order, which he had overheard, incautiously given to the charioteer, to “return to the palace.” But he knew not then that the palace near the gate was at that time the special residence of Prince Adrammelech.

Raguel, with his wife and Miriam, had not long reached the house of Tobit ; Edna was yet relating to Anna, with intervals of weeping, the story of the abduction of her daughter ; while her husband was discussing with Achiacharus what step should be taken for her recovery ; when their consultations were disturbed by sounds as of the whole household in commotion, and, before Anna could enquire the cause, Tobit suddenly appeared among them, returned from his journey into Media. He had already enquired of the first domestic he had met whether his son had returned, and received only the reply that he had not, without any reference to the sad tidings communicated in the letter of Abner, the son of Jonathan, the Benjamite. Therefore, when the embracings were over, the first sorrow which he heard of was that of his kinsfolk, and all Anna’s tears were ascribed to that cause. When he had heard the story, he asked for a particular description of the supposed guard, and declared it to be his opinion that it was Prince Adrammelech himself, whose palace was a den of wickedness, and who was ever bold in his licentiousness ; but never before dared thus to openly outrage the King’s justice on the King’s highway. This led to enquiries for the last tidings of the King’s health ; to which Achiacharus replied that it was no longer concealed from the Court, and the people, that the King was near his death. Then Tobit, according to the ancient custom of his people at the news of any severe calamity, tore his robe, and exclaimed : “Alas, then ! this is but the beginning of the oppressions of the wicked.

This is but a sign of the coming troubles of captive Israel. The fair daughters of our people will be ravished by our oppressors; our strong and comely youth will be made slaves; and our old men will be the objects of hissing and contempt. But, O God of Israel, spare us this King! Spare the protector of Thy captive people!"

These words reached the ear of the young Prince Esarhaddon, who had just entered the outer apartment, preceded by the usher of the house.

The dying King, surrounded by his family, had enquired for the Purveyor. He had done so before during the day, for the Purveyor was now about due to arrive in Nineveh. The King had often conversed with him on the religion of the Hebrews, and the might and special Providences of their God, and wished to speak with him again on these matters before he died. Esarhaddon, the King's favourite grandchild, who was standing near the royal couch, obtained permission to repair to the house of the Purveyor, with the King's command that he should immediately proceed to the palace, if already returned, or so soon as he should return. There was no other about the person of the King so anxious to gratify the royal wish in this matter, as to seek to bring Tobit there, unless in necessary obedience to direct command. But Esarhaddon had a great respect for the Purveyor, both as a remarkably upright man, and as the uncle and benefactor of his dear companion Achiacharus; and, knowing his father Sennacherib's hatred of the Hebrews, he was anxious that Tobit and his family should be protected from impending evil by the dying monarch's charge, expressed to his successor on so solemn an occasion. This, he doubted not, the King would remember to do, if the Hebrew could be brought to his bedside in time, and therefore the young Prince hastened to charge Achiacharus to acquaint his uncle with the King's desire to see him on the moment of his arrival.

Tobit was already opportunely arrived. The Prince had heard his lament for the King, and found him with rent garment. The conjunction of circumstances was most favourable to the errand of Raguel. The young Prince, when he heard the story of the abduction, and Tobit's suspicion that it was the act of Prince Adrammelech, advised the Hebrew to repair at once, as commanded, to the chamber of the King, without changing his rent garment; and when the King should enquire what ailed him, he should reply that he had rent his robe for a two-fold sorrow; first, on hearing the tidings of the King's sickness; and, secondly, because of the ravishment of his kinsman's daughter, who had been that day torn from her peaceful parents on the King's highway, by one of the guards of Prince Adrammelech's palace; but on no account to utter a suspicion that Prince Adrammelech himself was the ravisher, or had even any knowledge of it. This counsel inspired the sorrowing Israelites with hope; and Tobit immediately accompanied the young Prince to the palace, and to the door of the King's bedchamber.

By this time the King had considerably revived, and, according to the opinion of the physicians, the danger which had appeared so imminent a few hours since, had now abated. When the King learnt

from Esarhaddon that his favourite, the Purveyor, was in attendance, he revived yet more, and dismissed all from his chamber but the young Prince, and then commanded that the Hebrew should be admitted.

"Pardon me, my lord," said Prince Esarhaddon, "that I have brought the Purveyor into the royal presence without even permitting him to stay to change his garments. He had but just reached his house, and heard of my lord's illness, and was praying to the God of his people to save the life of the King, when I approached the door of his apartment."

While the Prince was speaking, Tobit approached, and falling to his knees beside the couch of the King, could not refrain from weeping as he kissed the extended royal hand with true affection and reverence.

"Withdraw but a short distance, my child, while I speak with the Purveyor alone," said the King to Esarhaddon; and then continued, addressing Tobit:

"I have wished for thy attendance, my faithful servant, that thou mightest pray for me to the great God of whom thou hast so often spoken to me. I remember to have heard thee say that He has ever especially favoured thee, and heeded thy petitions. Perhaps He will, even for thy sake, deliver me from this lingering sickness, and prolong my days, that I also may serve Him, as my foresire did through the preaching of Jonah. Surely, if He will spare my life, Jerusalem shall have peace, and a glorious temple shall be reared to Him in Nineveh."

And Tobit prayed beside the royal couch with much earnestness; his utterances being broken by pauses and sobs. In conclusion he again said: "O God of Israel, spare us this King! Spare the protector of Thy captive people; that the wicked may be restrained from oppressing the innocent, that our daughters may not be ravished by the mighty, nor our young men be condemned to slavery. Spare the King, O God, that the daughter of my kinsman may be delivered from the habitation of the licentious, and restored to her father."

When Tobit arose his rent garment caught the eye of the King, and he said, "What has troubled thee, my servant, that thy robe is rent? and what means thy petition respecting the daughter of thy kinsman?"

Then the King learnt the particulars of the abduction of Sara, whereupon he was very angry, and, beckoning to Esarhaddon, bade him to order into his presence, immediately, the captain of the household guard. The old fire seemed to have re-kindled in the eye of the King, and he was so intent upon the immediate punishment of the offender, that he determined to give his command direct to his officer, rather than through his son Sennacherib, lest there might arise delay in dealing justice to one of a nation which, he knew, the Prince of Assyria despised.

"Take this seal," said the King to the captain of his guard, "as warrant of the authority and urgency of thy errand. Take with thee a company of my guards and Raguel, the kinsman of my Purveyor,

and make search for his daughter in the palace of Prince Adrammelech. Deliver her into the hands of her father, and see them at liberty through the gate of the city. Do this speedily and faithfully, for thy life, whoever dare oppose thee. As to him who has been guilty of this abduction, unless he be of royal blood, let him be immediately executed before the people, with proclamation of his crime. If he be one of my house, bring me the tidings after thou hast liberated the maiden. Let me know who dare take occasion from my sickness to set at nought my laws, and oppress my subjects. Esarhaddon, let your father, your brothers, and the high priest of Nisroch know that I wish their presence again, as soon as the captain and the Purveyor have left the chamber."

"Prince Sennacherib," said the King, when the Princes and the priest again stood in his presence, "I believe now that I shall recover from this sickness ——"

"May the King live!" exclaimed all present.

"But if it still be the will of the Gods that I die, remember with favour my faithful servant the Purveyor. Continue to him the same favour and protection that he has so worthily received at my hands."

The majestic brow of the Prince of Assyria slightly darkened, and he remained silent.

"Swear, I command you, in the name of Nisroch, in the presence of his holy priest, that my servant Tobit shall never suffer from the displeasure which I know you entertain against the Hebrew people; but that you will extend to him your favour and protect him from his enemies."

Thus pressed, Sennacherib took the required oath.

"Adrammelech," said the King, turning to that Prince, "dost thou suppose that I gave thee a royal palace that it might become the resort of robbers, and ravishers of maidens? How long is it since thy servants have issued forth to force damsels from their parents on the highway?"

The young Prince looked upon the King in silent astonishment and confusion.

"Look better to thy household in future. I have this time provided punishment for the guilty."

The countenance of Adrammelech exhibited the utmost alarm. As soon as he could recover his judgment he said:

"I will go at once, my lord, and look into this matter."

"Nay, I have already told thee that I have seen to it. I command you to remain here."

The impious wish of the young Prince was that the King might not live to learn the whole truth of that adventure. But mostly was he concerned that the fair captive should not escape him; for he was deeply stricken with her beauty.

Nor did the King survive to listen to the report of the captain of his household troops.

The charioteer was executed as the perpetrator of the offence, and Sara was restored to her father, before Prince Adrammelech could interfere to prevent it. But when the royal officer returned to the

palace to report his obedience, and return the seal of his authority, the King was unconscious, and approaching his last moments.

Tobit, when he left the royal presence, had ventured to hope that his prayer for the restoration of the King's health was already in course of accomplishment. But the Almighty Ruler of Destinies had willed otherwise. He needed not the goodwill of King Shalman to secure the salvation of Jerusalem, and in His inscrutable wisdom He permitted the peaceable King to die, and to be succeeded by his son Sennacherib, who should become a terrible scourge to the nations, and even a great destroyer of the children of Judah and Benjamin.

The decrees of Almighty and Omniscient Providence, as revealed in the affairs of individuals, nations, and the world, are indeed mysterious to human comprehension; and, oft, apparently inconsistent at the period of their operation. Yet the progress of Time discloses a uniformity of almighty purpose in moral and physical advancements.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE HEBREWS RESUME THEIR JOURNEY, AND ARE PURSUED BY PRINCE ADRAMMELECH.—COMBAT BETWEEN ADDIN AND ADRAMMELECH.—A STRANGE ADVENTURE, BROUGHT ABOUT BY ASMODEUS, DEPRIVES THE WOMEN OF THEIR PROTECTORS, AND THEY ARE LEFT ALONE IN THE WILDERNESS.—THEY DISCOVER A CASTLE, INTO WHICH THEY ARE ADMITTED.



AFTER the liberation of Sara from the palace of Adrammelech, Raguel and his family immediately resumed their journey towards the Khan, where they had appointed to meet Addin and Camon. It had been their intention to reach that place some hours before the young men, that the women might be well rested, and refreshed to mount the mules which were to carry them another stage forward that same day, on the way to Arbela. Therefore were Addin and Camon much surprised to find that their friends were not yet arrived, and waited for them in impatient anxiety.

And when, about two hours before sunset, they were at length all met, and the day's adventure had been briefly related, it was decided still to press forward that evening to the next Khan; for alarm gave temporary strength to the women, and they, especially, were most impatient to press forward for dread of further molestation. The passionate anger of Addin was great against Prince Adrammelech, and bitterly expressed; but he was compelled to yield to this hasty departure when reminded that he was without proper arms to defend his party should the attack of the morning be repeated. For the captives, as may be supposed, were not permitted to wear arms, although Addin and Camon, nevertheless, carried with them concealed daggers, as well as slings, in the use of which the Hebrew youth were generally well skilled, that weapon being capable of easy concealment.

The outrage which Adrammelech had attempted, if even against an ordinary daughter of Israel, was alone sufficient to arouse the great indignation of Addin; but being attempted upon Sara, the dear object of his own ardent and jealous though unrequited love, it is no wonder that his mind was disturbed with most bitter personal hatred of the Assyrian.

"Now," said he to Raguel and Camon as they were journeying forward, "I have increased ardour in seeking the deliverance of Israel from this captivity, and a double vengeance against the royal house of Nineveh. I now swear, by the Temple, that when I return

to the siege of this city, I will especially seek combat with the haughty heir of Sennacherib, and that if ever we meet, one of us shall die."

While Addin yet spoke there came from behind a faint and distant rumble as of chariot wheels, and as they paused a moment to listen Raguel said:

"I pray Heaven, my lord, that you may not even now have to meet that same enemy, while unprepared for the combat,"

Sara, and her mother, and Miriam, by the alarm expressed in their looks, confirmed the opinion of Raguel, that the sound resembled that which they had heard in the morning, as the precursor of so much trouble. But at present the cause of their alarm was hidden from sight by rising ground.

"Let us as once conceal ourselves," said Raguel, in yonder wood, while we may yet do so undiscovered."

The women immediately turned their mules in that direction, while Addin appeared unwilling either to lead or to follow them, and lingered with his horse's head turned towards Nineveh; for Addin and Camon were mounted on swift Arabians.

"O for a good sword and buckler!" he exclaimed.

"But, not possessing them, my lord," added Raguel, "remember that it is impossible you can face successfully a fully-armed Assyrian. Imitate the noble lion who deems it no disgrace to retreat before an overpowering enemy, while himself is yet undiscovered and unchallenged."

"I seek not an excuse, my father, for avoiding this contest without dishonour; for I might indeed seek to guard these women from such an enemy by concealment, without charge of cowardice. But I ponder how I may avenge me of the approaching Assyrian, should it be Adrammelech; and I crave the meeting, even as the hungry lion shuns not the approach of a fat bull."

While Addin spoke he unwound his sling, and was feeling in his purse for one of the smooth round stones which the slingers always carried about their persons, in case of sudden need.

"I would remind you, my lord," observed Raguel, "that the women are approaching the borders of the wood without protection. They may even be rushing from an imaginary danger into the real presence of savage beasts of the forest, or no less savage bandit Arabs, while we linger here."

"It may indeed be so, my father." And, still carrying his sling in his hand, Addin turned his horse's head towards the forest, and all three hastening forward overtook the women at its margin, where Addin became the leader, and Camon and Raguel protected the rear. Here they made no halt, but continued their journey South-eastward within the screen of the edge of the wood.

"Here is no sound nor sign of danger," thought Addin, as he rode ahead of the party, "while yonder rumble of wheels increases in my ear like the challenge of a foe I have vowed to meet, and whom I long to encounter. Camon!" continued he aloud, "I pray you to join me for a moment. There is nothing to detain me here; neither

savage beast nor Arab robber lurk so near the highway. Do you guard our treasures, both of jewels and of love. I have vowed to meet the licentious son of Sennacherib. It were better to meet him now, while he seeks us, probably with little attendance, than at the coming siege of Nineveh, when he may be protected by impenetrable guards, and be almost impossible of assault. I would fain absolve me of my vow now, with my sling and dagger against his sword and spear and shield. I will therefore hasten forward under cover of this wood, and then turn back to meet the pursuer along the open road, for I would rather fight him eye to eye than take the advantage of his back; and thus, should I chance to fall, the pursuer will be misguided as to your whereabouts, and will hasten forward along the road in which he met me, leaving you in his rear, with the interior of the wood for your flight or concealment."

"But we are not yet sure, my dear Prince, that the sound we hear is of the wheels of the chariot of Adrammelech; and should it even be so, I pray you seek not to re-encounter a peril from which we have already wisely turned aside; but rather reserve your valour for our defence, should the danger actually find us out. Leave vengeance for the abduction of Sara to the God of our people, who has so signally delivered her from the palace of the Assyrian ravisher; and reserve yourself, my dear Addin, for the approaching day when we shall all arise for the deliverance of Israel, when every arm will be needed, and, especially, the precious leadership of our Prince."

"Nay, my dear friend," replied Addin, "fear not that I face over-much danger in this adventure; for although I, unarmed except by my sling and dagger, seek an Assyrian Prince fully armed, yet the danger is so much on the side of the foe, that it were shame to meet him so, were he not worthy of certain death, rather than the chance of life. Yet, even were it otherwise, I may not be restrained from seeking now to redeem my vow of vengeance against the vile abductor of the daughter of Raguel, whose cause is well worthy the exposure of my life. But, as you have said, we should know first if it be really the son of Sennacherib who approaches."

Addin then desired the party to halt in silence in the concealment of the wood, and approached, with Raguel only, nearer to the margin; whence, themselves still invisible from the road, they could clearly overlook the road and scrutinize the occupants of the approaching chariot. And as soon as it came in sight Raguel said in a low voice:

"Alas, it is even as we feared. We are doubtless pursued. The driver indeed is not the same, but the other warrior is certainly he who made this morning a morning of great sorrow to me and my family, although he wears now another disguise."

"And an evening of great sorrow to our oppressors, shall avenge the morning," replied Addin, "for the son of Sennacherib shall die."

Then Addin bade Camon and Raguel look to the women; keeping the chariot in view, and remaining in its rear when they should perceive its progress to be stopped by the fall of the driver. "Thus," continued Addin, "my adventure will only tend to your escape, even

should I fall ; for I will speed forward through the direct alleys of the forest until I can turn into the winding road unperceived, far in advance of the pursuer. I will then return and meet him, as though I had left you hastening on your way, and I had faced about to dispute his progress against you.

Then Addin kissed the hand of Sara, made a hasty obeisance to Edna, and dashed forward on his fleet Arabian through the shady glades of the forest, with sling and pebble in readiness. The rumble of the clumsy chariot drowned the slight noise of his progress over the mossy mould, and he was soon far in advance of Adrammelech. Before him was a rise in the ground which would enable him, on the other side, to turn into the road unperceived by the occupants of the chariot. Hastening forward, and thus turning into the road, he managed to regain the summit of the rise, while the chariot had not yet reached its base. Forgetting the caution of his friend Camon, forgetting the risk to the cause of Israel in the danger to which he would expose his own person, in his hardy courage he had already determined to use his sling against the charioteer only, and to seek more glory by the overthrow of his nobler opponent with a nobler weapon, in hand to hand fight. The chariot had just gained the foot of the rise when Addin had dismounted, and, before his hostile purpose had been suspected, sent his messenger of death with true aim into the brain of the driver. The heavy body tumbled, with a loud crash of armour, over the side of the chariot into the road, still grasping the reins and thus checking the rapid career of the horses. In a moment Addin was again in the saddle dashing forward. Bending low from his seat as he passed, he seized the sword of the fallen driver from its scabbard, while Adrammelech was in the act of snatching the reins from the death-grasp.

“Bold robber ! what means this ?” exclaimed the Assyrian, recovering from the surprise of the sudden attack.

“Bold ravisher of maidens ! it means that thy vile errand is foiled. But dread not my sling. I will fight thee with this nobler sword which I have won with a pebble, if thou wilt come down from thy seat.”

“Hah ! then am I near the fair doe of my chase ? Then she hath now cost me two charioteers ; and I grudge not the sacrifice to such a goddess of captives. But pray what art thou to her ? If her brother I may spare thee for the love of thy fair sister.”

“But I will not spare thee, thou snatcher of maidens. Wilt thou come down and fight me, hand to hand, or must I slay thee too with a stone ?”

Addin had reined in his horse at a considerable distance from his antagonist when he uttered this menace, with the sling and the sword in the same hand. And now would his rashness certainly have earned him his death, had the chariot of Adrammelech been furnished with its usual quiver of arrows and a bow. But it was not so furnished, for when the Prince, as soon as he was liberated from the presence of the dying King, had hastened to overtake the freed captive, he thought to win her back, as he had won her in the

morning, by the speed of his horses, and the strength of his sinews, and apprehended no need of offensive weapons, or Addin would, probably, ere this have been transfixed. But now, by accident, Addin had all the advantage on his side, while mounted on a swift horse, with the sling in his expert hand, and at a convenient distance for its use. Ever rash in his courage he yielded this advantage by claiming the fight on foot, hand to hand, with a powerful and skilful swordsman whose head and shoulders were protected with brass. Adrammelech hesitated no longer to come down from his chariot, saying :

“In such a cause I will deign to fight thee ; for a quarrel on behalf of such a queen of loveliness ennobles thee, and renders thy blood worthy to tarnish my sword.”

Addin then made a girdle of his sling, and, having secured his horse to the nearest tree, hastened to meet Adrammelech. The knowledge that the combat would be witnessed from the cover of the wood by one whose admiration he valued more than that of crowned Princesses, filled him with a courage that nothing could quench but death ; and his confidence of victory was complete, although based upon temerity. Not such was the confidence of those who looked on from the shades of the forest. Each one trembled for the rash youth who thus, all exposed, hastened to meet a warrior not less powerful of limb than himself, protected with armour and trained in the use of his weapons from childhood.

Adrammelech also, when he saw his foe approaching, felt ashamed of the inequality of the encounter, and, changing his tone, said :

“I promised, accursed slave, that I would deign to fight thee ; but, that thou mayst not die in so much vanity, let me explain that I meant I would merely slay thee, for thy treacherous murder of my servant, since thou hast so insolently scorned my offer of mercy.”

“Let thy deed confirm thy meaning, thou frightener of young girls !”

It would, perhaps, have been better for the Assyrian had he despised his enemy less, and approached him with more guard ; for, feeling too sure of striking him down when once within reach, the threatened blow was adroitly avoided by Addin, and Adrammelech received a wound in the sword arm from his more nimble antagonist. An expert swordsman among the captive Hebrews was a person undreamed of by Adrammelech, until that painful moment ; for that people being excluded from the armies of the Assyrians, none were supposed to have practised arms since the captivity ; and, with the exception of that family which the favour of the King had caused to be respected, they were a despised race. Yet Ephraim had ever been a warlike tribe, and Addin was the descendant of that royal house which had become its chief, and ruled all the ten tribes besides, by means of its superior prowess.

When Adrammelech found himself thus wounded and shamed by so scorned an enemy, he cursed him in the name of his gods, and shifting his sword to his left hand, which was as well trained to wield it as his right, he continued the contest with more wariness. For some minutes sword met sword, and feints were mutually foiled,

the advantage being slightly on the side of Addin, who was now the cooler of the two, and more than once did his blade ring on the helm of the Assyrian. Adrammelech now learnt that he had engaged in an earnest fight, which demanded the exertion of all his skill and care. And his fury was increased by the smart of his wound, as well as the shame that he, who had expected so easy a conquest, was the first to bleed ; and he pressed upon his enemy an attack so rapid, that Addin's danger was increased, and, while he skilfully warded every stroke, any one of which, had it reached him, would have proved his death, he gave way, step by step, before the pressure of Adrammelech, till they had nearly crossed the highway and reached the margin of the wood, where the captives were watching the conflict in anxious silence. Of those who watched, none heeded other during those terrible moments, but seemed charmed to the spot in fearful suspense, forgetful of all but the stirring scene before them. Sara was especially terrified at Addin's danger. She knew he was exposing his life principally on her account ; and, though averse to him as a lover, she was not insensible to a feeling of loyalty to the courageous Prince of her oppressed people, on whom the hopes of their national deliverance rested. And when she saw him so hard pressed, she cried out, involuntarily, "Oh, my Prince !" The effect of her voice upon both combatants was great and instantaneous. Addin's heart leapt with new courage at the sweet sounds, which he knew to be uttered on his own behalf ; while Adrammelech also recognised the voice, and falsely construed it to his own welcome, since he guessed not the princely quality of his antagonist. So pleasantly surprised was the Assyrian at the unexpected declaration in his favour, as he supposed, and the nearness of the object of his pursuit, that his attention was for an instant diverted from his defence, and Addin, availing himself of the moment of advantage, plunged his sword into Adrammelech's side with such effect that he tumbled to the earth, and his eyes closed as in death. Conceiving him to be slain, Addin exclaimed :

"My vow is now redeemed." And the concealed captives rushed from their hiding-place to congratulate him on his victory.

"But we must immediately hasten forward," continued Addin, "for after this deed we may consider all Assyria in pursuit of us."

He stayed only to kiss the hand of Sara, and thank her for the deliverance which her compassionate words had wrought for him ; then took the sword and scabbard of Adrammelech and girded it on himself. Camon also he armed with the sword of the charioteer, and, loosing the horses from the chariot, and securing them to a tree, that they might not return to the city and cause immediate pursuit, they all remounted and resumed their journey with all possible despatch. They continued to travel within the cover of the wood until the evening had so far advanced as to render their progress therein both slow and dangerous, when they turned into the highway, and travelled onward all the night. At daybreak they turned aside into the wilderness to conceal and repose themselves, for they dare not now stop at the public Khans, nor travel in the highway during the day, for fear of the avenger of blood.

Yet was Prince Adrammelech not slain. Soon after he had been left by his conqueror, in a state of insensibility resembling death, he was discovered, and conveyed back to Nineveh, where, in course of time, his wounds were healed; and he lived to earn immortal infamy, years afterwards, as a parricide and regicide.

The travellers had not proceeded far into the wilderness before they came to a spot which appeared convenient for their safe repose and refreshment. It was rather a wild garden than a waste, for there grew the lily and the rose in abundance; also the orange tree and the palm; and there they would find shelter from the noonday heat beneath a group of trees whose spreading branches formed a green canopy, and whose roots were nourished by a clear rivulet of pleasant water. They ate, and drank, and rested there in security, while the sun was rising, for the mules carried abundance of provisions for their journey; so that they were, fortunately, independent of the accommodation of the Khans in that respect. And when their repast was finished the women slept, while the men, in turns, slept and kept watch.

It was approaching the hour of noon, and Addin was keeping the second watch. His heart was elate with his recent victory, and with anticipation of the love of her in whose sight, and in whose behalf, he had fought a proud Prince and won glory. He had been refreshed from the fatigues of combat and travel by several hours sleep, and now paced to and fro, excited with day-dreams of sovereignty and happy love. Often he looked towards the slumbering group, and dwelt upon the charms of the fair sleeper whom he hoped to win. Then he remembered his pursuit of her in his dream, and again applied to her the language of Solomon, "Thou art fair, my love, thou art fair; thy lips, O my spouse, drop sweetness as the honeycomb; thy teeth are as a flock of shorn sheep coming up from the pools; thy cheeks are as the rose of Eden, thy forehead is fair as the lilies, thy hair as fine gold: thy breath is fragrant as the breezes that play in a garden of spices: thou art altogether lovely, my sister, my spouse!" Then he gave free rein to his ambitious imagination, and the wilderness which he paced seemed to have dissolved and given place to glorious pictures of fancy, so that he moved as one abstracted in scenes of his own creation. He had just been imagining that Sara was his Queen, seated beside him on the throne of Samaria, in all the splendour of royalty and beauty, when his day-dream was disturbed by startling cries in her own voice, but not from the spot where he had last glanced at her, as she lay slumbering. Looking quickly in the direction from whence the cries proceeded, he beheld an Assyrian horseman in the act of seizing the struggling form of Sara. Addin ran to his horse, and as he ran shouted to his sleeping companions to arouse them. His shouts awoke Raguel and Camon, who also hearing the cries, and witnessing the struggle, immediately started up and followed Addin to the rescue. The Assyrian, however, had succeeded in seating in front of him the struggling maiden, and dashed away some distance in advance of his pursuers, grasping her firmly, while she continued to cry, "Addin, save me!" Raguel also cried out to

Addin to rescue her, promising that she should become his wife without further delay: "Rescue her for thyself! I swear to give her to thee." And so engrossed was the attention of the pursuers that they bestowed no thought on Edna and Miriam at that moment, nor had they once even looked towards the spot where lay the sleeping women, unaroused by the cries of alarm. Although the pursuers used their utmost speed they were unable to overtake the Assyrian. Indeed they only succeeded every moment in separating themselves more completely from each other and from the women. For Addin, briefly responding: "My father, I will save her!" dashed on, and became foremost in the chase, and still within hearing of the now fainter cry, "Addin! Addin! Save me." Camon followed far behind, and was yet losing ground; while Raguel was separated from Camon by a yet greater and increasing space. So that eventually the two latter lost sight of the chase and of each other, and, unwittingly, each took ways diverging from that followed by Addin, who alone kept the chase in view, until the darkness of night intervened. Then he also soon lost sight and sound of the Assyrian and his captive. Still, like those who followed him, Addin continued to press forward at a venture, until his horse stumbled and fell beneath him from fatigue, and he found himself alone, benighted, and lost in the wilderness.

Thus were the male protectors of Sara all drawn away from her, far away and dispersed, by a stratagem of Asmodeus. For the Assyrian horseman, and the shrieking maiden were but false personations, employed by Asmodeus, that Sara might be left helpless in the wilderness, and exposed to his seductive arts, with Edna and Miriam to aid his cause.

So eager had the men been to start to the assistance of the supposed captured maiden, that they had not looked round towards the spot where the women slept, or they might have seen the real Sara still lying there in the embrace of Miriam.

And long they lay, unconscious of their forlorn state. For, over-wearied by the exertions of the preceding day and night, they now compensated nature with a long unbroken slumber, from which there was none to disturb them. Edna was the first to awake, and aroused the others. The sun was then approaching the western horizon, and the evening air was pleasantly cool. When, arising, they discovered that the men and horses were not at hand, they became alarmed, and searched and listened and called until near twilight. Then, as they wandered about in dismay, they met a fair lady, who, by the richness of her dress, and her attendant maidens and pages, appeared to be of high degree; and, at the same time, they perceived looming in front a castle, or palace, before which the lady was walking in enjoyment of the evening air. Sara's fears were not relieved at this discovery. She immediately dreaded the tyranny and violence of lawless power, from which she had already so recently suffered. But Edna did not hesitate to advance and seek tidings respecting three horsemen, which although she did not succeed in obtaining, she received words of sympathy and comfort from the lady of the castle when her tale had been told.

"Doubtless," said the lady, "your husband and his friends have been drawn from you by some sudden temptation of the chase, and will soon return to the spot where they left you. There some of my servants shall watch for their return, and look after your mules, while you take shelter in the castle until your friends are conducted to you there."

This gracious offer was gladly accepted by Edna, and the three women, mingling with the train, followed their hostess into the castle.

The reader is already aware that Raguel, Addin and Camon were scattered far away in a wilderness, and that the expectation of their return to the women that night will not be realized. But for the present we will leave these adventures.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SENNACHERIB REIGNS IN HIS FATHER'S STEAD.—HE RECEIVES THE HOMAGE OF THE LOYAL PRINCES OF HIS EMPIRE.—THE REVOLT OF SEPHARVAIM AND OTHER CITIES.—TIDINGS OF THE CAPTURE OF BABYLON BY MERODACH-BALADAN.—SENNACHERIB INVESTS SEPHARVAIM, AND, LEAVING RABSHAKEH IN COMMAND, MARCHES AGAINST BABYLON.—PREPARATIONS FOR A GREAT BATTLE.



THE good King Shalmanezar was dead, and his son Sennacherib had succeeded to his throne. We now approach that throne, where the new King sits to receive the homage of the Kings and Princes of his empire. The imperial seat was built after the pattern of the celebrated throne of Solomon, with the omission of the twelve golden lions, which represented the twelve tribes of Israel. The framework was ivory, embossed and inlaid with gold; two massive frowning lions of solid gold crouched one on each side, and the whole was gorgeously canopied with the rarest Tyrian purple. The King's mien was very majestic, and well became the proud tiara of Assyria. One hand rested on the royal sceptre, and the other upon the head of one of the lions, as though grasping its golden mane. The royal robes were weighty and glorious with precious stones. So much majesty dazzled the boldest courtiers, for none had before beheld such a King, nor met so truly royal a gaze from beneath the tiara. On the steps beside the throne stood the sons of Sennacherib—Sharezer and Esarhaddon; and, lower still, round about him, were grouped the officers of the empire, and the high priests of the various gods of Assyria, of which order the King himself was the archpriest. Prince Adrammelech was not present, being confined to his palace on account of his wound; and being, besides, under the severe displeasure of his father the King. The royal presence seemed to fill the place with an atmosphere of awe; and in the King's glance already gleamed that irresistible power of command which was so soon to thrill his armies with invincible ardour, direct them to the assault and destruction of the strongest cities in the world, and to win him the title of The Mighty King.

But the nations had not yet learned to dread the name and power of Sennacherib. Some of the tributary kingdoms had, like the Median provinces, even hoped to find in him a feeble successor to the victorious Shalmanezar, and had already determined to withhold tribute and assert their independence of Nineveh, as soon as the

death of that King should be announced. Nor was it unfrequent in Assyrian history that the close of a reign proved the signal for rebellion among the subject nations ; which, sometimes, for awhile remained unchastised, but more often caused the new reign to be commenced with cruel wars and terrible vengeance.

Immediately after the death of his father, Sennacherib had despatched fleet messengers to the various dependent Kings and Governors of the empire, commanding them to have in readiness their various contingents to follow the imperial standard, and themselves to repair immediately to Nineveh, to swear fealty and receive their orders for a campaign.

On this occasion the King sat upon his throne to receive them in full state ; that is, those whose dominions were sufficiently near the great capital to admit of so early an attendance. And in a hall adjoining the throne-room was a great and splendid gathering of Princes waiting to approach the King in their turns, according to precedence of rank or seniority. Each of these, when he had sworn homage, and laid at the foot of the throne the splendid presents carried by his retinue, took his place on the right or left of the King, and remained there during the continuance of the ceremonies. Lastly came some deputies of those Princes who had failed personal attendance, and the interest of the proceedings reached its climax. The countenance of the new King grew sterner, and was slightly flushed with anger, as the representative of the King of Sepharvaim approached the throne. For although it was possible that some of the deputies might satisfactorily excuse the absence of their lords by the plea of sickness, it was known that the majority would prove the heralds of revolt and defiance ; and there was strong suspicion against Sepharvaim, which was justified when its envoy thus addressed Sennacherib :

“ May the King live for ever ! Thus saith my master the King of Sepharvaim, ‘ We send greeting to our royal brother the King of Assyria, and may his days be eternal. Let the majesty of Nineveh and the majesty of Sepharvaim shine with independent lustre. Let us be allies, and illumine the earth with a twin glory. The power of Sepharvaim is mighty to aid a friend ; too mighty to serve a foreign master. May the King of Assyria live and prosper for ever ! ’ ”

“ Ha ! saith Sepharvaim so ? ” replied Sennacherib, “ hence to thy master, and say that he shall see me face to face. We will then compare the glory of our separate majesties.”

In similar terms had the independence of several cities been claimed, and when each had received the King’s reply he was immediately hastened out of the palace, and escorted beyond the city gates. When the audience appeared to be at an end, Sennacherib, turning to his chief minister, said : “ Is there no express from our cousin the King of Babylon ? ”

The King waited not for the Tartan’s reply, but looked to where the usher admitted an Assyrian general from the Court of Babylon, who claimed to be the bearer of urgent tidings. Prostrating himself before the throne, he awaited the King’s command to speak.

"What are thy tidings, Belib?" enquired the King.

"O dread King, may thy days be eternal. Have I thy command to speak my tidings in this open court, O King? and may thy servant speak and live?"

The manner of Belib implied that he was the bearer of important news, which the King might prefer to hear in private, and which might possibly arouse the royal anger even against the messenger. Sennacherib answered:

"Speak thy tidings openly, Belib, even if they be of revolt; for these Kings and Princes, my subjects and allies, already know that rebellion is rising many-headed in our empire; inviting us to inflict such a chastisement that, by the help of Asshur, our reign shall be ushered in with a glory that shall outshine all the majesty of my fathers, and their predecessors on this throne. Speak thy tidings, Belib, without fear for thyself."

While Sennacherib spoke he surveyed with a searching glance the countenances of the attendant tributaries, but read no faltering allegiance there. Had any been disposed to waver, the King's presence and confident glance would have inspired them with his own assurance of his approaching triumph and fearful vengeance.

"O great King," said Belib, "evil hath befallen Babylon; and the traitor Merodach-Baladan awaits thy mighty vengeance. That swift rebel, who escaped when the glorious King Shalmanezar took Babylon, and who hid himself so long from the execution of judgment, hath suddenly raised his standard once more. At the head of a great army of the tribes of Susiana he approached Babylon so rapidly and secretly, that he took the city by surprise in the night, aided by those of its inhabitants who love not the rule of Nineveh; and he hath slain my lord the King with all his household, his officers, and trusty guards, and I only, of all his faithful servants, have escaped at great peril with this heavy tidings."

A slight shade of sadness passed over the countenance of Sennacherib, and, arising from his throne to break up the audience, he said:

"The murdered King of Babylon, our beloved cousin, shall be terribly avenged! And thou, Belib, shalt hold a command in my army of vengeance.

"Mighty Kings and Princes of the empire! I thank you for this day's attendance at my Court. Fear not for imperial Nineveh. Although all the earth rebel against her, the earth shall be subdued, even from the upper sea of the rising sun to the lower sea of his setting. The revolted nations invite us to the glory of their reconquest, and to the countless treasures of their great cities, justly forfeited by their treason. Let Rabshakeh order forth my standard and royal attendance of war; and within this hour let the vanguard of the army appointed for Jerusalem commence its march out of the city through the Sepharvaim gate. When we have chastised the King of Sepharvaim, Babylon shall be regained before we cross the desert to Jerusalem. Let each of my noble allies to-morrow speed to his dominions, and with all expedition march his full contingent towards Sepharvaim. Henceforth our Court shall be held in the field, or in

the palaces of our enemies, until the whole earth be subdued. So grant Asshur!"

The Court then withdrew to a magnificent banquet, and on the morrow each King, Viceroy, and Governor started for his own dominion, whence with all speed the contingents of the allies were led to the aid of Sennacherib, against Sepharvaim.

Thus commenced one of the most terrible eras of bloodshed in the history of the world. In a few days the mighty city of Sepharvaim was invested with Assyrian troops, and when the powerful siege engines had been fixed in position for their destructive operations against the walls and towers, Sennacherib left the further conduct of the siege to Rabshakeh; while, taking with him the larger portion of the army, which was now greatly swelled by the arrived contingents of the allies, he hastened in person to the attack of Babylon. Thus, in consequence of the prompt action of Sennacherib, the King of Sepharvaim failed to delay the advance of the Assyrians against Babylon, as had been contemplated by Merodach-Baladan; nor was it possible for the latter so soon to hasten to the relief of Sepharvaim, with his Susianian allies, and confirm her independence, as laid down in the secret treaty between those Princes before Sepharvaim had ventured to revolt from so powerful and near a mistress as Nineveh.

As Sennacherib advanced he found the whole country revolted in favour of their native Prince, Merodach-Baladan; and the inhabitants of the villas and villages in his route, who had obtained sufficient notice of the approach of the Assyrian army, had carried their goods, their cattle, their stores, and their families, into the fenced cities, which in those days were very numerous in the plains of Mesopotamia. These minor cities the King stayed not then to attack, being anxious to invest Babylon before Merodach-Baladan should have had time to prepare for a long siege. But the latter Prince did not await the arrival of the Assyrians of Nineveh before the walls of the great capital of Babylonia. Being made aware of the rapid advance of Sennacherib, he boldly marched towards him with a great host, that the fate of his kingdom might be decided in one great battle. He had armed, and drilled as infantry, one hundred thousand of the Babylonians, who hated the Assyrians of Nineveh; his Susianian allies furnished him with a great host of horsemen, and warriors who fought in chariots with bows and arrows, javelins, and battle-axes; and, besides these, he had with him an army of Arabian light cavalry, mounted on fleet horses and camels, and armed with bows and arrows, long spears, and swords. Confident of the success of these overwhelming forces, he provided a large following of led horses, and baggage waggons, and all the camp necessities for a long campaign; intending, when he had destroyed Sennacherib's army, to press forward to the relief of Sepharvaim, and then continue his march to the gates of Nineveh with an increased following of allies.

When Sennacherib heard of this approach, while he was yet about two days' journey northward of Babylon, he was exceedingly glad, seeing before him, in his confidence of victory, a great advantage to his affairs in being able to decide, in one day's fighting, what might

otherwise have cost him some months of siege operations; during which latter period, rebellion in other parts of the empire would be gaining more strength, every day of its unchecked life. The King immediately selected a suitable place to fix and fortify his camp, and disposed his forces for a great and decisive battle.

Now, that same evening tidings reached Sennacherib which increased his gratitude to the Assyrian Jupiter for having induced Merodach-Baladan to take the field, rather than await a siege in the strong city of Babylon—tidings which rendered it of pressing importance that the Assyrian army should be speedily liberated from the Babylonian expedition, for conquests elsewhere. For that night word was brought to the royal pavilion that the nations north of Nineveh, which inhabited the mountains and plains of Armenia, were invading and plundering the Assyrian territory. These nations had been conquered by a former King of Assyria, and became tributary to Nineveh; but, during the latter days of Shalmanezar, they had refused tribute, trusting once more to their mountain fastnesses for protection from chastisement. Now, in the disturbed state of the empire, they had become further emboldened. Also, later that night came even another messenger to the King's pavilion, with news that the Governor of Media had revolted and was raising a great army, composed of the tribes of the Magi, the Arizanti, the Budii, the Struchates, the Parataceni and the Busæ.

Thus on all sides it appeared that the Assyrian empire was crumbling to pieces; or, at least, that the recent boast of Sennacherib was about to be proved, and Nineveh must answer the challenge of the revolted world.

During that day and night the Assyrian army, working and resting in divisions, constructed Titanic earthworks about the camp, while the great master-mind which ordained these labours was at work in the royal pavilion extending his mighty energies thence, and directing important movements in various parts of the empire; and, during all the night messengers were being despatched by the King to various parts of the camp, to the capital, and throughout the provinces.

On the morrow, the necessary works having been completed—raised as if by magic, through the disciplined co-operation of vast numbers, the King commanded that the whole army should rest and feast, that they might be refreshed and invigorated for the impending battle. For the Assyrian scouts had brought in word that the enemy was near at hand, and approaching rapidly; and it was thought probable that Merodach-Baladan would offer battle as soon as he came up with the Assyrians, confident of an easy victory through the vastness of his army, which greatly exceeded in numbers that of Sennacherib. Or, if he should halt to encamp, it was the purpose of the Assyrian King to advance upon him at once with all the advantage of fresh and well-fed troops. For Sennacherib had already sacrificed to Asshur, as well as to the gods of Babylon in whose territory he was encamped, and, according to the priestly interpretation, the omens of the victims promised victory to his arms.

While the soldiers were thus resting and feasting in the camp,

Sennacherib rode among them, addressing gracious remarks to them, reminding them of the famous battles of the preceding reign, in which they, or their fathers, had routed, with utter destruction, armies greatly superior to their own in numbers ; how the standard of Nimrod and the Lion had never been lowered before an enemy ; and that it was about to lead them once more to a great victory and great spoil. The King then promised that when they had destroyed the approaching armies, he would lead them direct to Babylon, where there was enough wealth to enrich every man of them, and which great city they should spoil to their hearts' content. "The men of the city," said the King, "you shall slay, to atone the death of their late King, my murdered cousin, from whom they have revolted ; and their wives and daughters shall be yours." By his words and mien the King inspired the most faint-hearted of his soldiers with courage and eagerness for battle ; and the camp rang with plaudits as he passed through its various divisions and nationalities.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TOBIT'S LAMENTATIONS AT THE TIDINGS OF HIS SON'S DEATH.—THE GREAT BATTLE OF THE EUPHRATES.—PUBLIC REJOICINGS IN NINEVEH.



WHILE the Assyrians are waiting the approach of Merodach-Baladan and his host, let us return for a brief space to Nineveh.

The Purveyor, when he retired from the presence of the late King Shalmanezer, went to his house rejoicing that he had been instrumental in effecting the rescue of the daughter of his kinsman; and also that his prayer to the God of Israel for the health of the King had, as he believed, been specially granted. Thus the two-fold sorrow which had caused him to rend his garment had been removed. It was, however, but the brief recession of that ever-returning wave of trouble which naturally beats against the human heart; and it returned upon him with increased and overwhelming force when he read the dreadful tidings contained in the letter of Abner the son of Jonathan. He then felt that his heart must burst with its swelling grief. His was the full agony of sorrow; and he pressed his forehead with both hands, for there also, as well as at his heart, was a sensation of bursting asunder. At length, mercifully, the flood-gates of his eyes gave way, and he wept with bitter sobs. With women and children these affliction-valves work easily; but with men their hinges are rusted and harsh, and great must be the up-spring of sorrow which can force them open, and relieve the swelling heart with a flow of tears.

"Oh, my son! my son!" he exclaimed, when he could find utterance. "Why hath thy God forsaken thee, and permitted His holy city to be stained with thy innocent blood?"

Anna also found her first grief all renewed in sympathy with her husband's outburst—in sympathy not with her husband's sorrow, but with her own. And she could not refrain from upbraiding him, even in that moment of his supreme and sacred grief.

"Did I not tell you," she murmured, "that I should never see my dear son again? But you would not hearken to me, to keep our only child near us. O why did you command him, against his own choice, and regardless of my entreaties, to journey through the dangerous desert to that dreadful city, where they have murdered him? Oh, my son! my dear, my only son!"

"I know not how to comfort thee, my wife. But at least do not thou add to my share of this bitter sorrow, by thy reproaches. Firm was my faith in God that He would guard and bless our dear son in this journey to the holy city. But His ways are indeed mysterious. His ways are just also; and let us not question His goodness and Providence."

"O that you had hearkened to me, then would our boy never have been slain by those cruel priests!"

"O that I had been slain for thee, my son!" exclaimed Tobit. "O God of fair and noble Zion, of the city of Beauty and of Holiness, where this thing has happened, teach me to yield to Thy inscrutable will without murmuring."

Tobit replied no further to his wife's upbraidings. He mourned for his son in solitude for some days with unrestrained grief, to which the unexpected death of the King could scarcely add an extra pang. But it is as natural for the wounds of a strong mind gradually to heal, as for the wounds of a vigorous body to close and cicatrize; and in the course of time the bitter tempest of grief had given place to calmly cherished recollections of both his beloved son and of his royal master, and resignation to the Will and Wisdom of God in these bereavements.

In this improved though still very melancholy mood, Tobit was walking in his garden one evening, when his kinsman Achiacharus, accompanied by the young Prince Esarhaddon, approached him by the path which led from the King's palace. For the grounds which surrounded the houses of the King's servants were all connected with the palace, and overlooked from its splendid terraces. The countenances of the two youths were bright with excitement, and Esarhaddon exclaimed:

"We have great news, Purveyor, from the King! Rejoicing will now replace panic in Nineveh; and her advancing enemies, those who have not been already overthrown, will turn back trembling."

The Prince paused, and Achiacharus added:

"To-night the city will be illuminated and keep a feast of triumph."

"To celebrate a great victory," resumed Esarhaddon, "which my father has won, with a few Assyrians, over the traitor Merodach-Baladan. You must cease your mourning, Purveyor, and rejoice with us. The united armies of the Babylonians, the Susianians, and the Arabians, are destroyed; and we have taken such spoil that Nineveh will scarce contain it. It is probable that by this time our brave army occupies the city of Babylon. Never was so great a victory won, nor such swift vengeance taken."

It was a subject on which Tobit, especially in his bitter sorrow, could not become enthusiastic; but he said:

"I rejoice, my Prince, that the King your father has been preserved, and that the God of Battles has enabled him to hurl back invasion from this city."

"We shall soon learn more of this great news," said Achiacharus, "for the messenger from the King will follow the Prince into this garden so soon as he is liberated from Prince Sharezer."

While they were yet conversing, the command was issued by Prince Sharezer, through a hundred swift messengers, that Nineveh should be illuminated ; including the palaces, the houses of the King's servants, and the royal grounds. The Purveyor immediately withdrew to do his part in obedience to the command, and soon his place in the group was occupied by the courier from the battlefield, whose name was Sardon.

"Now tell us, Sardon, all about this great battle ;" said the Prince, as they began to move along the beautiful walks, "who was the chief hero of the day ?"

"Your royal father, O Prince, even apart from his high office, was the most shining hero of the day ; as superior in wisdom and valour as in imperial station. When from his chariot he watched and commanded the battle, he proved himself a god in the wisdom of war. And when, at critical times, he rushed with his guards to those parts of the field where his captains were most pressed with overwhelming numbers, men mistook him for Asshur descended from Heaven to aid us. Then our soldiers rallied, and did marvels of valour, and the enemy fled in panic."

"O glorious war !" exclaimed Esarhaddon, "I trust my noble father will permit me to accompany him in his next expedition. Who else, Sardon, won special glory ?"

"The King has pronounced Belib the greatest hero of the battle ; and, besides at once creating him a Prince of Assyria, he has promised him a kingdom when he has rendered one more great service, to which the King has secretly appointed him. The King has also commended, individually, each captain of his army, and pronounced every soldier a hero who fought in that battle, which he has named The Great Battle of the Euphrates."

"Tell me, good Sardon, the particulars of the fight from the beginning."

"Then, my Lord, I must first speak of the camp. When the King heard that Merodach-Baladan was advancing to meet him with a great host, the numbers of which were much exaggerated, although they were, in fact, quite treble our own, he chose a position suitable for a strong camp, and centre of operations. It was on the northern slope of a gentle swell of land, which extended like a great billow of the sea some miles from the Euphrates, eastward, across the plain. On the West we were protected by the broad and rapid river ; and on the East and North the King ordained the erection of stupendous earth-works, which the army completed in twenty-four hours. Also he fixed the siege engines for hurling great stones and arrows against the enemy, should they succeed in crossing the ridge, or attack us in masses in flank or rear. Also beyond the earthen walls of the camp he caused to be cut deep trenches for the discomfiture of cavalry and chariots ; and over the ridge, on the southern slope towards the approach from Babylon, he also cut deep and broad trenches in suitable places, behind which the archers, and javelin-men, and slingers, might fight unbroken by cavalry, if the enemy could be brought to the attack. For the King's design was to appear to stand

on the defensive against such superior numbers, and so begin the battle with more advantage; that his final charge might be decisive after he had weakened and dispirited the enemy. Further to aid this plan, and draw the enemy on, as soon as the cloud of their approach was visible on the distant horizon, the King marched slowly forward with about half his forces; the remainder of his army being concealed behind the ridge as a reserve. Then, when the enemy had approached within about a mile of us, we halted, and began to retire; which being perceived, we were supposed to falter and retreat in fear of their superior numbers. When we had regained our chosen ground we rapidly assumed an attitude of defence.

"The vaward division of the enemy was composed of the Arabian cavalry, and archers and spearmen mounted upon camels to act as infantry; and, to receive them, this was our order of battle: Behind the trenches before-mentioned were stationed the archers, three deep, the ground on which they were placed having been made in the form of broad sunken steps, so that the hind ranks could shoot over the shoulders of those standing before them, without the latter stooping or kneeling, and, in those attitudes drawing their bows with less power. In the same line, unprotected by trenches, were the long spear men, also three deep, placed to receive the attack of the cavalry; behind these were stationed the javelin-men and slingers; then our cavalry, general infantry, and charioteers; and, concealed over the ridge were about fifty thousand reserves of all arms, including a due proportion of chariots and cavalry. Our front extended about a thousand paces along the base of the ridge, from the river to eastward.

"The Arabian cavalry were dashing forward on their fleet steeds, far in advance of the main army, deeming themselves alone sufficient to destroy our thin line. They were armed with bows and arrows, long spears, and swords. In the excitement of their advance they drew their bows too soon, and their arrows fell short of our ranks. They then couched their long spears without halting. On the other hand, our archers had been strictly commanded to reserve their arrows until the front of the enemy should be fully within range; and then they were to keep up an incessant flight, rank after rank. The knowledge of the protection afforded by the trenches added to their steadiness, and the King's command was obeyed with exactness and coolness. The training of both the archers and the slingers proved splendid. I believe that scarcely an arrow or a stone missed its mark. Consequently the first discharge told severely upon the advancing enemy; many of the foremost horses fell, and others swerved, riderless; and by the time our third rank had drawn their bows the front was strewn with death and confusion. Neither had the javelin-men been idle; so there were but few of the enemy who reached the points of our long spears.

"So long as any of the Arabians continued to advance within bowshot our lines were maintained; all the fighting being left to the archers, javelin-men, and slingers, and the occasional thrusts of the long spears. But soon the whole division of the Arabians was in complete confusion, having suffered much loss. Then the King sent

forth the command for our horsemen to advance and destroy. Those in front immediately formed in the usual manner so as to open lanes for them, and the total rout of the enemy was effected with much slaughter on their side, and very little loss on ours.

"Meantime we could perceive that the second division of the enemy, composed principally of the Susianians, quickened their advance against us when they saw the rout of the vaward; the survivors of which were all scattered towards the East. For the Susianians despised the Arabians as undisciplined warriors; and now judged them cowards thus to retreat before our almost stationary line of battle; and deemed that such conduct should be no discouragement to their own advance, nor lead them to distrust a better fortune in their encounter with the Assyrians.

"The King, perceiving this, caused our trumpets to sound the recall; and our horsemen, giving over pursuit, returned, each leading by the bridle a captured horse. These resumed their positions in line behind the long spears, the javelin-men, and the slingers, leaving our front as originally planned by the King.

"Then your royal father, O Prince, descending from his chariot, mounted his charger; and, riding proudly before the ranks, he commended the soldiers as he went, urging them to continued firmness and obedience, predicting that before the day closed, by the help of Asshur, the spoils of all yonder vast army should be theirs, and the way to undefended Babylon open and clear before them. 'Soldiers!' he exclaimed, 'Asshur fights for you; Asshur gives victory to the brave!' Elate with their recent success, and encouraged by the noble countenance and the words of the King, our soldiers rent the air with loud plaudits, and with shouts of 'Long live the Great King!'

"And, now, the Susianian division, having reached within about three bow-shots of our front, halted, and Merodach-Baladan rode forward in his chariot, attentively to examine our position and order of battle. Having already witnessed the inefficiency of cavalry to break our line, he determined, as the consequence shewed, to attack us with a heavy charge of chariots, and pierce our front, at whatever first sacrifice it might cost. The trenches, however, which protected our archers were, by the formation of the ground, concealed from his view at that distance. Accordingly the chariots, in which the enemy was very strong, were ordered to the front, and crowded with spearmen, archers, and axemen. Again our bows were ready and our spears fixed to receive with steadiness the charge which came on with the noise of thunder. This second attack was nearly as disastrous to the enemy as his first. The discharges of our archers and javelin-men proved so true and steady, that the rapid advance was checked with great slaughter and confusion before it reached either our trenches or our long spears, and those few who reached our line were either slain there or taken prisoners, with their chariots and horses. The field before us was now the scene of the wildest confusion and havoc. Many chariots were broken or overthrown; some inextricably entangled; of others the horses were slain, or wounded and unmanageable; while

our archers and slingers were still adding to the slaughter. Those of the drivers who found it possible to do so, turned back in rapid flight ; while those of the spearmen, archers, and axemen, who had occupied the unserviceable chariots, and were not too severely wounded, fled on foot.

“Undaunted by this second disaster, Merodach-Baladan now brought forward fresh archers, bowmen against bowmen, some of whom took advantage of cover from the barricade of ruined chariots. But so greatly superior was the skill and coolness of the Assyrians, that the advantage continued with us ; and while the numbers of the enemy were being steadily reduced, and their spirits depressed, we suffered comparatively little loss, because of the inaccuracy of their aim ; and our forces were yet fresh, confident, and spirited for a decisive charge when the King should judge that the most suitable moment had arrived.

“By this time the third and last division of the enemy had come up, consisting principally of the Babylonian infantry, newly raised, and untried in the field. These were followed by the camp men and camp material, the stores, and the siege engines intended to operate against the walls of Nineveh. And now, O Prince, your father the King, being assured of victory, and seeing the whole of the enemy and spoil within his reach, sent a messenger over the crest of the rise, with orders to the Tartan to move the whole reserve under his command, which included half of our army, under concealment of the northern slope, beyond the limits of the enemy’s right flank, and then to pour over the rise and push the foe towards the river. The Tartan being in readiness for this command, the movement was made with great expedition and order ; a large portion of the infantry being crowded into the chariots, and mounted on the spare horses, ready to dismount and form at the right moment.

“The rapid movement of a thousand chariots was not effected without a great noise, which even reached the ears of the adverse army, and filled their hearts with fear of the approaching attack of an unseen foe. On the other hand the sound, well understood by our own soldiers, filled them with ardour for that activity of battle, directions for which the King’s riders were already bearing swiftly through our lines to the various captains. At the same time Merodach-Baladan rode through his host, with ill-concealed anxiety, endeavouring, in vain, to rally drooping hearts.

“For a short time longer the fight was limited to the archers, javelin-men, and slingers ; Merodach-Baladan evidently hoping yet to destroy us, in time, by his superior numbers. Then that rumble of chariot-wheels which, like the roll eastward of a distant thunder-storm, had before alarmed the foe, was now faintly heard again ; like the return of the same dreaded storm, driving before it fear and panic. It was the return of the Tartan upon the enemy’s flank. Perceiving that the attention of the enemy was divided by the ominous sound, the King commanded that the trumpets should sound for the attack, and our army pressed forward over the untrenched ground with a deafening shout, except the archers and slingers, who, during this

movement fought, for awhile, from their original positions with unabated activity. Panic now seized the greater portion of the opposing army, but their Prince himself, with many of his captains, still strove to restore order; and succeeded in holding in command numbers sufficient to engage all our valour, and all the great ability of the King, to complete the victory. Your royal father, O Prince, having advanced, still watched the contest from his chariot; and, through his swift aids, directed the captains; on several occasions leading his own guards to the support of such parts of his line as were dangerously pressed by concentrated forces.

"There is no doubt, my Lord, that Merodach-Baladan is a valiant Prince, and the men of Babylon brave soldiers, and capable, if they had the discipline of the Assyrians, of becoming splendid troops. Again and again did their captains rally masses of the discomfited army, and dash against our line like the waves of the great sea against the unyielding rocks; also ever to be broken and dispersed like the rebounding spray.

"It was now visible to both the commanders that the Tartan's attack upon the flank of the Babylonians had succeeded; and his line was ever extending towards the enemy's rear as it pressed the panic-stricken host; so that the right wing of Merodach-Baladan's army was every moment becoming more confusedly condensed, and forced towards the river.

"Then Merodach-Baladan appeared to become possessed of a desperate courage; or, perhaps, the recklessness of despair. Despatching his best general, with some chosen troops, to check the progress of the Tartan, he dashed at the head of the chariots of his guard suddenly towards the position occupied by your royal father. The heads and breasts of his horses were all protected with armour, and the chariots were manned with warriors of unusual strength and courage, all clothed in mail, and armed with great spears, swords, and battle-axes. The advance was magnificent, and Merodach-Baladan kept the vaward, like a god conscious of invulnerability. The instant this movement commenced, Belib begged the King's permission to encounter the Babylonian Prince, and seek to avenge upon him the murder of his late King, which request your royal father granted, giving him the command of the chariots of the royal guards, and commanding him to take Merodach-Baladan alive, if possible, and with as little hurt as was necessary for his capture; an immensely more difficult undertaking than mortal combat.

"As though by mutual consent and truce, the other combatants in this part of the field now ceased fighting, to watch the issue of this most stirring incident of the battle. When the chariots of Belib and Merodach-Baladan approached each other the interest was intense. The Babylonian advanced with buckler addressed and spear uplifted while our champion trusted to his shield to parry the spear, and to his battle-axe to stun his adversary. Belib had commanded the occupants of his nearest chariots to look to his defence from other enemies, while he fought this combat personally with the adverse Prince.

"The brief action, my Lord, was impressively grand. The glittering

spearhead of Merodach-Baladan was parried and driven up by the shield of Belib, and the next instant the latter had sprung into the enemy's chariot, and was grappling with him there ; while an Assyrian, as was preconcerted, overthrew the Babylonian driver, and took his place. Immediately the advance of Merodach-Baladan towards King Sennacherib was resumed—no longer as a defiant foe, but the constrained captive of Belib. At the same time the chariots which followed the captive leader were encompassed and captured by the followers of Belib.

As soon as the Babylonians and their allies perceived that their chief and his guards were captured, they no longer stood their ground, but throwing down their arms, attempted flight. It was now, however, too late to retreat. The Tartan had by this time completely outflanked their disordered masses, and was driving their right wing upon them in irretrievable confusion with immense slaughter. Many thousands fell by our swords, many thousands were trampled to death in their flight, and as many were forced into the Euphrates, where they also perished, and their bodies, afterwards, floated on the swift stream to Babylon, the silent harbingers of its invasion and woe. Few, except those of the division of Arabian cavalry who were the first to attack us, escaped from the field ; yet the captives are fewer than the slain."

"Honour and glory to our brave army !" exclaimed Esarhaddon. "I pray Asshur that I may one day be its leader, to imitate my magnificent father's wisdom in war, and emulate the valour of the noble Belib. I am glad that my father has promised to make a King of that hero. Was Merodach-Baladan taken unwounded ? and what sentence has my father pronounced against him ? Will he be sent to Nineveh ?"

"No, my Lord," answered Sardon, replying to the last question of the Prince, "the King has decided to carry him to Babylon, and there put him to death in the sight of the revolted citizens. He was wounded in the struggle by the axe of Belib, but not mortally."

"Know you, Sardon, what further service Belib is required to perform, before he receives a kingdom ?"

"Yes, my Prince ; it is no secret to the war council, and need be no secret to the King's son ; although, that the expedition may be more effective, it is yet a secret to the general army. Belib is intrusted with the command of a division sent against the revolted Medes under Arbaces, and will strive to meet them at the mountain-pass through which the river Caprus flows. Or, if he be too late for that, he will follow them towards Nineveh, and attack them in their rear, in concert with the army of Nineveh, which Prince Sharezer will lead out to meet them in front."

By this time the evening was advanced ; and, as the sky darkened, the great and beautiful city of palaces and gardens kindled brighter and brighter, every moment, with the increasing myriads of lights of the great illumination. Jubilant music was heard from all quarters of the city ; the bands of the garrison paraded the streets ; and the singers also in companies, shouted songs of triumph. Among these

songs was a new one brought by Sardon from the camp, which was already being caught up and sung about the palace. It had been composed by Belib—who was a minstrel as well as a warrior—after the late battle, and had greatly pleased the King. It began thus :

“ Of Sennacherib the Mighty King,
Son of Sargon the Conqueror,
Beloved of the Gods—
Sing, O Assyrians ! ”

These various sounds, far and near, were ever heard, now louder now fainter, mingling with the universal din of joyous excitement, and the unbroken roar of chariots and horses rushing to and fro in the streets. The beautiful canals also, which veined the immense capital in every direction, like other streets of polished silver, were soon alive with gorgeous barges, all ablaze with illuminations, doubly brilliant from the waters' reflection, crowded like the wheeled vehicles, with sightseers, themselves forming a striking part of the glorious pageant.

By the skilful illumination of the royal gardens they had become indescribably enchanting and novel ; even to those who had been longest accustomed to them under ordinary aspects. And here the Princes of Assyria, and the great officers of State, and of the palaces, kept up rejoicings, until the dawn of the morrow ; except when they rode forth to view the city and add to its splendid triumphal show by their presence.

Thus did Nineveh celebrate the victory at the Great Battle of the Euphrates, which Sennacherib had won against Merodach-Baladan. Thus once before had Nineveh rejoiced at the defeat of the same Prince, and his expulsion from his kingdom of Babylonia by the victorious Shalmanezar. Again will Merodach-Baladan escape, to fight more battles with Assyria, until, by his increased experiences of unsuccessful war, he will learn to win back his kingdom.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE HEBREW WOMEN ARE ENTERTAINED AT THE CASTLE OF BENAMMI IN THE WILDERNESS.—SARA OBSERVES IN BENAMMI A STRONG PERSONAL RESEMBLANCE TO TOBIAS.—EDNA ENGAGES IN FRESH MATRIMONIAL SCHEMES.



Following the Assyrian King we have left the other persons of our narrative considerably in the rear.

We left the Hebrew women entering the strange castle in the wilderness. There an attendant conducted them to a suite of rooms, elegantly furnished, which they were informed would be at their exclusive service so long as they chose to remain. Soon another slave brought them each a change of garments suitable for evening wear, as a present from the lady of the castle, with the request that they would presently sup with her. This invitation from so amiable a lady, whose hospitality and words of comfort had given them leisure to find themselves with appetites keen for the evening meal, was gratefully accepted.

Edna and Sara supped at the same table with Zabina, as the lady of the castle was named, and were attended by several slaves. The style of the repast was princely; and, to the surprise of the Hebrew guests, there was a strict observance of Hebrew customs there. While they ate and drank, sweet music was performed by invisible musicians, so soft and gentle as not to interfere with conversation.

The guests were now informed that the lord of the castle was named Benammi, brother to Zabina, and that he was at present absent on a hunting expedition, from which he was not expected to return for two or three days. At the same time Zabina suggested the possibility that should Raguel and the young men not return soon, but have been tempted away so far as to have lost their way, yet they might fall in with the hunting party of Benammi in their wide excursions, and return with him. Neither Edna nor her daughter could conceive the probability of Raguel leaving them for the chase, nor could they conceive any better reason for the absence of all three, and therefore the suggestion of Zabina was received with more of comfort than otherwise.

Three days passed without any tidings of their scattered protectors, and, notwithstanding the varied amusements and comforts provided by the generous Zabina, the Hebrew women were naturally in great alarm and uneasiness. There yet remained the slender hope of some tidings with the return of the hunters, now hourly expected; but it was slender indeed. Then, to furnish some further comfort, and to

put despair further off, their kind hostess promised that, should Raguel and the young men not return with Benammi, the whole country around should be searched by his riders.

Meantime, Zabina's conduct towards Sara had been so like that of an affectionate sister, that the Hebrew maiden already reciprocated her kindness with love, the mutual bond being materially increased by the Israelitish descent of Zabina, and her profession of the old religion.

"My father," said Zabina, when relating to Sara the history of her family, "was a rich Hebrew, who, when a very young man, adopted the calling of a travelling merchant, and left his native land of Asher to visit and trade in the distant marts of Asia. At Damascus he joined a caravan about to start for Reseph across the desert. Thence he descended the Euphrates, trading successfully at the many great cities of that river, till he reached the lower sea of the sun-rise. He then ascended the Tigris, ever trading from city to city, until he reached Nineveh, with his wealth immensely increased. At Nineveh he met and loved a lady of high station and great beauty, whom he gained in marriage, and who became the mother, first of myself, then of Benammi. My mother added vastly to my father's riches, so that there were few richer families in Nineveh; but my father became again restless to travel and barter. After the birth of Benammi he made several journeys to distant parts, both by land and by sea, and was still uniformly successful. Ultimately he consented to settle down with his family, and built this strong castle, that he might the better secure his incredible wealth therein. Here in the course of years both he and my mother died, and left us all their possessions in equal shares. My brother, being proof against the attractions of our sex, finds his chief enjoyments in hunting, while I live equally contented with my condition, and his brotherly love and protection."

Sara heard with satisfaction that Benammi was accounted insensible to the charms of women. She had been earnestly hoping to be able to leave the castle before the return of its lord, so much had she come to dread the effect of her presence upon all men who beheld her beauty unveiled. She hoped now that, should it be her fate to meet Benammi, she might for once escape the persecutions of selfish love.

At length, one evening, the castle was all astir with the arrival of its lord and his followers, laden with the trophies of their prowess in the Assyrian wildernesses and woods, including among their victims the maned king of the forests. For the Assyrians, even in those days, had not degenerated to hunters of hares and coneys. The boar, the bear, the ibex, and the deer, the lion, the leopard, and the wild ox or buffalo, were the objects of their hunt. It is strange that interpreters of constellations should have identified Orion with Nimrod, because therein a hare is being chased by hunter and hound. Imagine the pre-eminently "mighty hunter" of ancient history—the ruler of mankind by personal force, hunting a timid hare, while the primeval earth was yet unconquered from the savage beasts, who were accustomed boldly to roam hill and valley, champaign and forest, and still

snarled and snapped at the mighty hunter who successfully disputed their dominion.

When the bustle and excitement of the return were over, Zabina soon brought Edna and Sara into the presence of her brother, and made him acquainted with their story, that he might say if he had seen anything of their missing friends; and, if not, might redeem her promise to send forth riders in search of them.

In the bold hunter to whom they were introduced, the Hebrew women beheld a very young man, of so modest a mien, as to appear almost bashful in their presence, and Sara was immediately struck with his resemblance to the dearly cherished vision of Tobias, which she had seen by the fountain in the garden of Damascus.

When Edna had finished her description of Raguel and his young companions, Benammi, after some consideration, said:

"I have, without doubt, seen your husband, but he was not in company with the two young men whom you have described as his fellow travellers. He was alone in the wilderness, a full half-day's swift riding from here. It was three days since, that, in hunting a bear, I became separated from my followers, and met such a man sitting by a spring, and his horse grazing close by. He hailed me as I passed, and asked if I had seen an Assyrian horseman carrying off a maiden. I replied that I had not, when he explained that his daughter had been torn from him by an Assyrian horse-soldier; that he and two friends had joined in pursuit, and had followed over much country without gaining upon the ravisher; until, at last, he, the father, had been out-riden by them all, and left alone in the wilderness."

"You did not tell me," said Zabina, addressing Edna, "that you had another daughter who had disappeared with your husband and the young men."

"Nor have I another daughter," replied Edna, "nor do I comprehend the meaning of this supposed ravishment, since my daughter never left my side during that day's rest in the wilderness. It is altogether a mysterious adventure."

"It is, indeed, a very remarkable adventure," assented Zabina, "which I am very anxious to know the end of. Doubtless we shall soon be able to learn more of it from your husband himself." Then, turning to Benammi, she said to him:

"I have promised, my brother, that you will send some riders in search of these friends of our guests. I pray you direct them to the journey at once."

Benammi then despatched three riders, furnished with hunters' horns; one direct to the spot where he had met Raguel, and one to the right and another to the left of that route, with instructions to search onward for three days if necessary; and if Raguel were not then found to return by other paths, and continue the search as they came.

And now, day after day, awaiting the return of the riders, the Hebrew women remained the favoured guests of Zabina and her brother. Each day their returning anxieties were re-allayed by kindly

ingenious and hopeful arguments, and the passage of the hours eased on by fresh amusements. And the carriage of Benammi towards Sara continued so modest and unobtrusive that, much to her satisfaction, she believed Zabina had not falsely represented her brother as quite insensible to the charms of women. Yet was he completely courteous, and evidently solicitous, even as an affectionate son and brother might be, to gratify both Edna and her daughter.

So, in the course of a few days, Sara came to endure his presence and courtesies without uneasiness; and, before the seventh day after his arrival, she even found herself indulging in the contemplation of his countenance with some degree of pleasure, reading therein, as she fancied, an increasing resemblance to the lovingly-remembered features of him whose supposed death she ever mourned. Instead of aversion and alarm, his presence now excited in her mind only pleasingly mournful recollections.

On the morning of the seventh day after the departure of the servants of Benammi in search of Raguel, Zabina had much to do to soothe the anxious excitement of Edna, who now clung to the belief that the riders, having remained out to the full period of their instructions, would return unsuccessful. Zabina had already exhausted all her consolatory arguments as to the probability of the discovery of Raguel, and, appearing to yield at length to the anticipations of Edna, as to immediate disappointment, sought to raise a new hope of more distant accomplishment, and said:

"And if, my dear friend, your fears are to-day realized, and our servants return without your husband, we will even send to Ecbatana to seek tidings of him there, and inform him of the place of your refuge, should he be found. Meantime you shall continue our beloved and welcome guests. So, I pray you, continue yet patient and hopeful. And, further, let it comfort you to remember that, even should your husband never return—which Heaven forbid!—you have been singularly provided with a home in this wilderness; and, in losing a husband, will have obtained a son powerful to protect you, and another daughter who will affectionately care for you. For my own part, I confess to you, that your temporary loss has been to me a great gain, which I dread to consider temporary also. In the companionship of Sara I have found a new pleasure of life. She has become a dear sister to me; and, dreading that the return of her father might part us again, I have often thought how delightful it would be to me if Sara should become my sister indeed, and co-mistress of this castle, by accepting the hand of my brother."

"But," replied Edna, evidently interested in this suggestion, "I have never observed in your brother any disposition to look with interest upon my daughter. Indeed I have observed that he regards her with more apathy than did ever any other young man who has been admitted to her society; and with the more surprise because I have at the same time seen that Sara has regarded your brother with more interest and favour than she has ever shewn towards any other man. Hitherto every man who has ventured to approach her has met only with an imperious reserve. She has equally scorned the offered

love of a Prince of Assyria, and of the most noble and most wealthy among her own people, including a royal Prince of Ephraim, who placed his life in great jeopardy for her sake."

"Benammi," replied Zabina, "has certainly given me no authority to declare that he ever desired Sara as his wife; yet my observation of his manner and conduct towards her has led to an assumption differing from yours. The heart of my brother, hitherto untouched by the beauty of woman, is, I am persuaded, now readily open to that new happiness which he would welcome as the accepted lover of your daughter."

There ensued a pause in the conversation, while Edna was thinking of Addin, whom she had lately championed for her son-in-law. He was a Prince, and she was ambitious that her daughter should become a Princess. Addin might become a King, and her daughter at the same time a Queen. But where was Addin now? And he might fail to win his kingdom. He might even lose his life in the attempt to win it, together with all his wealth, and then her daughter would be merely the poor obscure widow of an unsuccessful rebel. Benammi also was a Prince in power and wealth, already an established reality, and with no prospective risks of degradation. Besides, Sara was so perverse, that there was no calculating what courses she might adopt if coercion were attempted in the matter of her union with Addin, should he ever present himself again; while, as to Benammi, she appeared to be already wonderfully prepossessed in his favour. After all, therefore, it would, perhaps, be well to encourage Zabina's views, and dismiss all thoughts of Addin as a son-in-law. Then, speaking aloud, she said: "And yet, my dear Zabina, if such a matter may be thought of, it must be moved in with much discretion and caution. So averse has my daughter ever shewn herself to marriage, rejecting, as I have already stated, even great Princes, that, with all her evident liking for my lord Benammi, it will take time and care to betray her heart into such a love as shall render a lover agreeable to her. And, meantime, it is important to our success that no hint of our views escape to her, or to her maid Miriam, to affright her heart from its tendency, before it is safely secured in its snare. And it would be well that Benammi, if he love her, should conceal his passion from her knowledge, and first establish himself in her affectionate regard in the character of a kind brother."

Trust Benammi fully to exercise this caution, foolishly wise mother! So exclaim we; but Zabina replied thus:

"Then, surely, we may be patient about the return of Raguel; for have we not much to do, worthy the interval, while search is being made for him? The time of waiting will not be lost, but be employed to advance the happiness of us all."

The effect of this conversation upon Edna was marvellous. Her anxieties about Raguel were now almost entirely dismissed, and were not renewed when the servants of Benammi returned from their search unsuccessful. Heretofore, her schemes for the disposal of her daughter in marriage to a rich and amiable man, which was her great ambition, had failed in most remarkable ways. Now she deemed success quite

probable. For was not her daughter freed from that hitherto important obstacle—faithfulness to her early lover? Had she not already shewn more favour and partiality to this Benammi than to any previous suitor, although Benammi had not yet sought to make himself acceptable to her? And, then, powerful circumstance, she was located in his house, under the daily influence of his amiable and courteous presence, of his wealth, and of the grandeur, luxury, and comfort of a princely home, which she had only to consent to accept, and it would become her own. Besides, there was the additional inducement to win for a sister, and obtain the perpetual society of, the noble lady Zabina, so warmly beloved.

Edna had always said, and meant it, that her daughter's husband, besides being rich and powerful, must be one attached to herself, and who would be her good and affectionate son; and this lord Benammi had shewn himself, beyond doubt, greatly prepossessed towards her—had indeed, so far, shewn himself as attentive—and even more reverently so—to the mother, as to the daughter. Here, then, her most ambitious wishes were in prospect of realization.

That same day Benammi and his sister determined to shew their guests over those parts of the castle which they had not yet visited, and to take them through the secret vaults which contained their treasure. Then Edna saw what gave increased importance to the projected match. The prize to be won through her daughter proved far greater than she had before conceived it possible to be.

In the secret vaults an enormous amount of wealth was passed under their inspection, in gold, silver, and precious stones, so that it appeared impossible to consume it in a long lifetime, by the most lavish expenditure. There were also valuable and curious manufactures of every description, from all parts of the world—something adapted to meet every want, and gratify the most extravagant desires, if material things could. Also there were accumulations of masterpieces of art, and rare mechanisms, sufficient to afford a lifelong source of pleasure and amusement. Altogether the wealth they viewed was incalculable, and as amazing to Sara as to her mother. But Sara was more fatigued than gratified with the exhibition. They were no less struck with the varied magnificence of those parts of the castle, and enclosed grounds, which they now visited for the first time. And it was remarkable how thoroughly unostentatiously these things were shewn by Benammi, and how modest and devoid of self-importance was his behaviour, as he exhibited his vast resources. Without apparent emotion of pride, he smiled with gratification at the pleasure which Edna evidently derived from this survey, and remarked aloud that he hoped his guests in future would be less lavish of thanks for the easy hospitality which he and his sister would afford them, seeing how unlimited their means, how extensive their castle, how numerous their servants; and that they were more than repaid by the pleasant society of such friends. “Even if you live with us as sumptuously as the most luxurious Princesses,” continued he, “our wealth is so superabundant that it cannot be effected thereby, and you are heartily welcome.”

When Benammi had thus spoken they had reached a suite of magnificent rooms, furnished in a very princely style, where terminated their survey, and there Benammi left them with his sister Zabina. These rooms, Zabina informed them, were to be their future apartments. And presents of costly stuffs awaited them there, and slaves to attend them, so that they were commencing to live indeed at the cost and in the style of Princesses.

When they were left alone Edna was enraptured at her recollections of what she had seen, and at the evidences of her increased favour with the powerful lord of all this wonderful wealth. And she forgot her husband in the contemplation of the magnificent prospects before her. But Sara, after her first surprise, resumed her usual even manner—sadly calm and calmly sad. And, that night, before dismissing her maid from her bed-chamber, she said:

“O, Miriam, I am weary of these scenes of lavish wealth, and sensuous pleasures; and I like not this change, which appears to afford my mother so much gratification. Surely the apartments we lately occupied were even far too grand for us, who should be anxious mourners, until the return of my dear father. I pray Heaven he may soon come to relieve our anxieties, and take us back to Ecbatana, for I long for my humble chamber there, where I may hide myself from the world, and find quiet time to indulge in thoughts of sorrow and of hope.”

“And yet, my dear mistress,” replied Miriam, “your simple maid has been rejoicing at this our last adventure, hoping that the pleasant hospitality and diversions of this castle would gradually erase from your mind a sorrow, which it is, surely, profitless to indulge.”

“Never, Miriam, again suggest to me such treason as forgetfulness of my loving sorrow. Never, never, shall my heart be enticed from mourning for its dearly, dearly beloved. It is even for that sad indulgence that I crave more leisure, and still to fortify my soul with hope, and with faith in our dear re-union where no accident shall again part us. O Miriam, here they scarcely leave my poor heart time to commune with its companion in Heaven. Though doubtless the music of this place must be very grateful to the joyous heart, to me it is painful discord. Last night it was very cruel. Soon after you left me I dozed, thinking of my beloved. His image gradually grew more and more distinct to my dreaming mind. He approached me and regarded me with a countenance so thrillingly beautiful, so truly his own, that I now think I have done his memory wrong by supposing, for a moment, that our host even slightly resembled him. He seemed about to speak to me, and embrace me, when a crash of music from below disturbed the dream, and put to flight the sweet angel of my murdered love.”

Miriam loved her young mistress, but loved not this mood of hers. She could not appreciate this hopeless love, so obstinately cherished for the supposed dead. But she could well appreciate the grandeur and rich accommodation, the music, and the ever-varying pleasures, of their present abode. And she, too, although the thought had never been expressed, had some slight conception that her mistress might

possibly, if she chose, become at some future day the wife of Benammi. The return to Ecbatana was by no means a pleasant anticipation with Miriam ; and she ventured again to speak :

“I trust, my dear mistress, that, after all, the great kindness of our noble host, and the warm love of his gentle sister, will yet win you to endure, even with satisfaction, your stay in this splendid place. As I love you truly, I would that it might be so, and that your sorrows may soon give place to new-found joys.”

“It may not be so, Miriam. I pray that we may soon be again at Ecbatana. O what can have become of my dear father !” Then, after a minute’s pause she continued :

“I hope I am not ungrateful to our kind friends here, yet I am sure my gratitude is not proportioned to their generosity. It is growing, daily, less agreeable to me to be indebted to Benammi, yet every day his favours increase. And as to his gentle sister, I feel that I love her for the love she has shewn me, yet my love for her does not increase in proportion to her abundant kindness. I suppose my poor wounded heart is henceforth incapable of any great love. Thus, after all, I am but an ingrate while living here, and would fain start this very night for Ecbatana. Let us implore that Heaven will speedily restore to us my dear father, who has been drawn from us by so strange an illusion. Were not my trust in the God of Israel very firm, I should dread that some great evil lurked near us, to our danger.”

Then Sara embraced, and dismissed, her faithful friend and attendant, for the night.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ADDIN FOR MANY DAYS PURSUES THE ASSYRIAN RAVISHER.—HE FALLS IN WITH A PERSIAN BESIDE THE TIGRIS, AND LEARNS FROM HIM NEWS OF THE ACCESSION OF SENNACHERIB, AND OF THE REVOLT OF THE CHALDEANS, THE ARMENIANS, AND THE MEDES.—THEY TAKE COUNSEL TOGETHER, AND ADDIN, FINDING HIS QUEST NOW HOPELESS, STARTS WITH THE PERSIAN TO JOIN ARBACES THE MEDE.



WE now return to Prince Addin, whom we left pursuing the visionary ravisher of Sara in the wilderness. The purpose of Asmodeus, to draw from the Hebrew women their guides and protectors, was accomplished. Raguel and Camon were lost to all, and to each other, and were pursuing different routes through the trackless waste. Addin stood beside his fallen steed in an agony of unavailing impatience. He pulled at the bridle and endeavoured in vain to arouse the noble creature to renewed effort. He listened for the repetition of the call of Sara, but could catch no other sounds than the distant howling of wolves, the hooting of owls, the plaints of nightingales, and the other usual voices of the nocturnal wilderness. He was forced to abide until his horse should have recovered strength to proceed; and every moment of this delay was to him as a long period of torture. The lady of his deep adoration, his beautiful Princess—his own now by the brief but solemn gift of her father—was being hurried from him, as it appeared, in the strong lewd embrace of the ravisher; farther and farther every moment from the hope of rescue. And, alas! the pursuit was paralyzed by the exhaustion of his horse. He paced to and fro beside the prostrate animal in a frenzy of rage and madness; ever, as he turned again, looking with piercing gaze towards the point of the Assyrian's flight. This, he had observed, had been for a long time eastward, until they had penetrated a mountain pass, when the flight was continued in a south-eastward direction.

As the strength of the willing steed had thus inevitably yielded to over-exertion, so the mental agitation of Addin could not hold out for ever; and, in time, his limbs also grew too feeble to continue the rapid motion to and fro. His brain grew dizzy and his heart sick; and he sank down beside his horse, with the same need to await the recovery of strength, before his errand, however urgent, could be resumed. With his hand pressed to his hot forehead his limbs

gradually relaxed in slumber ; but his imagination worked out even more cruel delusions in his sleep, than in his mad wakefulness.

By the time Addin awoke from his feverish dreams his horse was sufficiently refreshed to move forward, though with speed much abated. And for several days he pressed forward towards Babylon, in the—every day more hopeless—hope of recovering his phantom bride.

After having crossed a river, and travelled through much wilderness, his way was for many miles beside another river, which was fed by a thousand streams from a long range of mountains on the right hand. He followed its course for three days without discovering a pass through the mountains, but at length, on the fourth day, he came to a sudden and complete break in the range, through which the river itself turned and flowed, and continued its course on the other side, through the plains of Dura—that Dura which was on the Tigris, not those plains of Dura far away westward of Babylon. The pass through the mountain was dreadful and dangerous to traverse. Sometimes the narrow and uneven way was nearly level with the swift river ; then led up a steep rocky path, which left the distant roar far below. It was also the more difficult from being covered with loose stones. More than once the way appeared to be blocked up and terminated by huge fragments of the mountain, which had toppled down from above, and lay right across the chasm—river and path. Then was the traveller's curiosity aroused to peer into the hidden scene beyond, and his anxiety great to find a way under the enormous rock. The wind here was incessant and terrific, although Addin had left calm weather behind him in the plains, and, uniting its roar with the noise of the rapid river, made a deafening din. On both sides, the sloping rugged walls of rock were pierced with many caverns, convenient for the concealment and ambush of such robbers as had prowess enough to dispossess the wild beasts of their lair there. The arduous journey through this dreadful pass was at length accomplished by Addin without accident, and the river, freed from the narrow channel of rock, soon lost its impatience of restraint, and followed, more calmly, its widened course through the plains of Dura. For several more days this river continued Addin's companion, like a living, murmuring thing, then lost itself in the Tigris.

And, now, Addin perceived a man who was eating beneath the shade of a tree on the bank of the Tigris, while his beautiful Arabian horse grazed on the rich herbage. Approaching him, Addin enquired if he had seen such travellers as the Assyrian officer and the maiden.

"Truly I think I have," said the man. "This very morning I saw an Assyrian officer, answering to your description, travelling towards the Euphrates, whose only companion was a fair lady remarkable for magnificent hair—of the richness of gold itself."

"It is she whom I seek ; and him who accompanied her I am sworn to slay. I thank you for the tidings, and must speed on." While he spoke he prepared to swim his horse across the Tigris.

"Stay, stranger ;" said the man, who was an Elamite or Persian, "since I know that you have cause of quarrel with the Assyrian, I

will tell you news that will better guide your revenge. There is no need to press forward. Your enemy is returning upon you ; but so accompanied that you will need my counsel to give you any chance of reaching him."

"What mean you, my friend?" asked Addin. "The moments are very precious ; yet I must stay to hear briefly the meaning of your words."

"I must first ask, have you heard the news from Media?"

"I have heard no tidings for many days ;" replied Addin, with a look of concern, "have the Medes revolted?"

"They have," replied the Persian, "and I read by thy countenance that thou should'st have been with them."

"It is even so," ingenuously confessed Addin, "but I have for many days been a wanderer in the wilderness, and other solitary places, in pursuit of the quest which I have named to you. And your news even adds to the urgency of my departure, that I may the sooner recover my bride, and return to my other duty."

"Your bride! Then you may indeed stay ; for the lady I saw could not have been the same. She was no unwilling companion of the Assyrian officer. I may now safely confess to you that my errand in these parts, with the army of Belib so close in the rear, will not stand the questioning of a loyal Assyrian, and when I this morning heard approaching me the ring of horses' hoofs upon the rock, I deemed it necessary, before the travellers came in sight, to hide myself, and remained concealed until they were gone past and out of hearing. I, however, saw them from my hiding place ; and, surely, the lady was the soldier's own bride, not thine ; for I observed that they conversed lovingly as they rode slowly side by side ; and the lady uttered something, unheard by me, so pleasing to the Assyrian, that he even bent towards her from his saddle, and she towards him to receive his kiss on her very lips."

These words thrilled Addin with the keen pang of jealousy. Certainly Sara had plighted him no troth ; yet he could not understand how such a heart as hers could have been won so soon, and by a ravisher who had violently torn her from her parents and friends. The reader is already aware that it was not Sara at all, but the phantom raised by Asmodeus whom Addin in vain pursued, and who had tempted him farther and farther from the real object of his love, and nearer to destruction.

"Besides this reason for the abatement of thy haste to go forward," resumed the Persian, "I will tell thee others if thou wilt but give me patient attention. Whether the Assyrian I speak of be the enemy you seek, or not, I have already said that he is by this time returning, and coming towards us, therefore you need not cross the river to seek him. But, before I say more, for which there is abundant of leisure, I pray you to swear to me by the Sun, and by thine own God, that nothing which I shall reveal shall be turned by thee to my own harm ; and that thou art indeed not only the enemy of Assyria, but a friend of the Medes and their allies, and wilt aid their revolt."

"By the God of Israel, and by Samaria whose rightful Prince I am,

I swear to all that thou hast named ; but I swear not by the Sun, which God made on the fourth day of the Creation, which is, therefore, no God, but a work of God."

"It is sufficient:" said the Persian, with increased respect of manner, "I remember thee as the royal captive of Israel who hath a great part to act in the eastern rising. And now, O Prince, I will inform thee that yesterday King Sennacherib defeated Merodach-Baladan in a great battle fought by the Euphrates, two days north of Babylon."

"*King* Sennacherib?" interrupted Addin, "when I left Nineveh Shalmanezar was thought to be recovering from his sickness. Is he indeed dead, and his successor already near Babylon? It was deemed, too, that Jerusalem would be the first destination of Sennacherib's avenging army."

"King Shalmanezar has been dead many days, and the swift tidings of his death has broken to pieces the empire of Assyria. His son Sennacherib judged the situation to be so perilous and urgent that he has put off the days of mourning, and moved his forces to immediate action. The army of Jerusalem became the army of Babylon, and, as I have told thee, has destroyed an immense power under Merodach-Baladan, consisting of three hundred thousand Arabians, Susianians, and Babylonians. Merodach himself is captured, and to-morrow, or next day, the victorious King will probably be in possession of Babylon. But, meantime the nations of Chaldea and Armenia are pouring down from their mountains, and wasting the country of the Assyrians, ever pressing towards Nineveh; while Arbaces is up in Media, with the full accord and aid of the Arizanti, the Struchates, the Magi, the Budii, the Busæ, and the Parataceni; and will soon be, if he be not already, defiling through the passes to the attack of the Assyrian capital. The rising had also another powerful friend, whom I omitted to mention, namely, the King of Sepharvaim. But I fear that now his powerful neighbour and ally, the King of Babylon, has fallen, Sepharvaim must fall too, being already invested by a part of the Assyrian power under Rabshakeh."

"Thus, then," exclaimed Addin, interrupting the narrative of the Persian, "brilliant history is being accomplished, and the world remodelled, while I, who should have been a prominent actor therein, have been wandering in the desert, ignorant of events, and supposing that the world could not be disturbed until I should return to its affairs. Yet the events you relate are so marvellous, and so crowded into brief space of achievement, that I wonder while you speak, whether I am dreaming or have just awoke from a dream. Alas!" continued he, more in soliloquy than in converse with the Persian, "that I should have been drawn from my high station in these affairs, and omitted from all part therein, through the act of one accursed Assyrian. While I seek to recover my lost Princess, I jeopardise the crown which I have promised her—perhaps even imperil the success of the nations in this uprising, by withholding my contingent." Then, turning again to the Persian, he said, "Surely, my friend, the lady whom thou hast seen is not she whom I seek. It is impossible that

she could have granted favour to a stranger, and her ravisher. Yet would I assure myself by encountering them."

"It was of that matter that I was now about to speak, my lord, replied the Persian, "That lady cannot have been your betrothed bride, judging from the circumstances which I have already mentioned. And, if she were indeed the lady you seek, you could not account one so false worthy of further pursuit, while urgent honour and high concerns claim your presence in a contrary direction. And the Assyrian whom she accompanied was doubtless on his way to join the King's army; and will, therefore, return with the army of Belib; for I learned, before escaping from the Assyrian camp, that Belib held the King's commission to incorporate into his army any officers, or contingents, which he might meet, advancing to join the King in obedience to the King's proclamations, which have been sent through all the provinces to raise auxiliaries. Thus the especial enemy whom you are seeking is now, probably, returning towards you; but, as he will be an individual member of a considerable army, I cannot see how that can profit your enterprise."

"Who is this Belib of whom you speak; and what is the errand of his army, which you say is marching this way?"

"Belib was one of the generals of the late King of Babylon, and he alone escaped when Merodach-Baladan, after taking the city, slew the King, and won to his side the whole garrison and people. Belib alone remained true to the Assyrian supremacy, and, flying to Nineveh, was the first bearer of the tidings of the disaster. Yesterday he proved himself a great warrior, and was pronounced by Sennacherib to be the chief hero of the great battle of the Euphrates. With his own hand he defeated, and took captive, that noble Prince Merodach-Baladan. And, now, the Assyrian King, confident of the re-conquest of Babylon and Sepharvaim, has despatched Belib at the head of a division of the royal army—with a commission to incorporate into it all that he may meet on the march—to endeavour to gain, before Arbaces, the mountain pass of the river Caprus, and there check the advance of that general, and so save Arbela. Or, should Belib be too late to meet the Median there, he will turn and hope to strike him in the rear before Nineveh, at the same moment that the garrison of the capital will march out and attack him in the front. Such is the mischief planned against our people and our allies, of which I go to warn Arbaces, having obtained the knowledge at much peril. Thou seest, O Prince, the jeopardy of our peoples; and how necessary is the fulfilment of thy contract with Arbaces and his other allies. For, in thy absence, the Hebrews will recognise no other leader; and the rapid successes of Sennacherib in the South, render more pressing the full and immediate combination and action of the East, while yet the rising in the North is unchecked, and the King, with his main army, is distant from the capital. Shall we even now depart in company, my Lord Prince of Israel?"

"O hard destiny!" exclaimed Addin, "which places me between two powerful adverse impulses, both of duty, one of strong honour of love, and one of strong honour of patriotism. Loud still in my

heart rings the cry of my lost love, to follow and save her, drawing me ever onward, while behind me my people, my allies, and all oppressed nations, call as loudly for my aid against accursed Nineveh. Thy reasoning is persuasive, my friend. How can I hope to recover or avenge my bride by advancing singly in a land overrun with armies? How can I hope to discover her in wide Mesopotamia? Sooner may I expect to find her at her home in Media; for if she continue firm in her virtue, and find it possible to escape, thither will she go. While if her virtue has yielded, or shall yield, and she prefer to remain with the stranger, it will be still bootless to attempt her recovery. As to the Assyrian, thou hast shown me that I shall be more likely to meet him, and avenge me, by returning to take my place among the allies; and seeking him when we shall encounter army against army; for he certainly fled towards the way along which thou hast declared Belib to be returning. Let us therefore return at once, and prepare in Media for the reception of the Assyrian general."

"It is well determined, my lord, and, if thou art fresh enough for the journey, I would advise that we start immediately; for it is desirable that we meet with Arbaces before he shall have advanced far from Ecbatana, that his plans may be adapted to the circumstances which I shall communicate to him. For better speed, our route should be by the river Gozan, and by an unfrequented path, well known to me, which will bring us briefly on the Median road, about midway between Ecbatana and the pass of the Caprus. By this route we shall reach the allies much earlier than by preceding the Assyrian army direct by way of that river."

While the Persian was speaking, he was observing Addin's horse, which was in a sorry condition for such an errand, and continued:

"But thy horse, my lord, is unfitted for the journey. It is well I can lend thee a proper substitute."

The Persian then whistled, and immediately there advanced towards him, with graceful action, the beautiful Arabian which Addin had already observed grazing not far off; and also another, of similar beauty, which had also been feeding a little farther away, screened by some bushes. Between these and the Persian there was more than that intelligent understanding which exists between the Arab of the desert and his favourite steeds. Nor was the Persian less skilful than the children of the desert in the management of his horses; although his nation took not generally to such exercises until some generations later, when Cyrus the Great instituted the Persian cavalry.

These horses were of a breed the most swift and most intelligent in the world; and so rare that few but Kings possessed them; and Kings who possessed them not, sought in vain to purchase them for gold, diamonds, or lands. The ancient poets ascribed to their breed a celestial origin, tracing their pedigree to Zephyr and the winged Harpy. It is also recorded of them that they have been known to speak in human language, on special occasions of warning to their masters. However that may be, these, which came at the call of the Persian, were very beautiful and very intelligent. When, in cases of emergency in his expeditions, the scout dismounted, and bade them

hide, they would move off lightly in different directions, as noiselessly as if their hoofs were ethereal, and with the speed of the wind. When he needed them again he had but to sound his shrill whistle, and they were speedily before him. In the night, in the wilderness, they caused him no care, never straying beyond his call. Rather were they his safeguard, for they ever warned him of the approach of man or savage beast. In battle, too, they were equal to shield and armour, their quick sight ever detecting the coming arrow, or the thrust, or the descending blow, so long as the battle was in the front.

Both animals now answered the Persian's well-known call, tossing their beautiful heads as they came, and prancing around him in playful manner. He was a cautious and clever servant of Arbaces, employed on imperial errands, and used these steeds on his expeditions of urgency, riding each alternately, while the other followed, and so accomplishing long journeys with great speed. But on this occasion he calculated that he could afford to spare one horse for so important a fellow-traveller as Prince Addin, and yet complete his journey in full time to prepare Arbaces for the approach of Belib.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE DEATH OF CAMON.



AT once mounting their saddles they rode towards the river Gozan, leaving Addin's wearied horse free to roam and feed on the plains of Dura.

Along the river sides were many villages, the settlements of captive Hebrews, placed there by command of King Shalmanezzer on his return from the capture of Samaria. These, as he passed among them, Addin endeavoured to incite to follow him, and join the Median revolt; but they refused, alleging, as good reason, the exposure of their country to the chastisement of the Assyrians.

On the third day they had reached a rocky country, leading to the great Median road, which, farther on, stretched right and left of the pass through which they were travelling, and ran for some miles between two long and lofty ranges of mountains. They had not yet, however, reached that road, but were approaching it over ground difficult for their horses, from its unevenness and the prevalence of loose stones. Although the day was about a fourth advanced the sun had only just climbed above the distant mountains, and shot his beams over their summits. Then the Persian immediately espied, far ahead, what seemed like a river sparkling in the sunshine. The mist of distance permitted nothing to be seen but the moving flashes, small as stars but numerous and crowded. The practised eye of the observer, however, detected the approach of troops whose arms and armour scintillated with the sun's rays, while nothing else of them was visible. He communicated to Addin his discovery, and, as it was impossible, at present, to learn whether the approaching force was friendly or inimical, they decided to advance cautiously, and pick a screened way, which the nature of the place rendered very practicable. So they meandered forward among masses of rock, until at length they thought it prudent to alight, and conceal themselves and their horses, in case the advancing troops should prove to be the allies of Assyria. Although themselves concealed, they contrived to obtain a clear view of the way along which the troops were advancing. Now the long line, more distinctly seen, appeared like a monstrous glittering dragon bristling with spikes of steel, crawling among the rocks; sometimes portions of its huge length were partly concealed by the undulations of the country, then it would drag itself again into clearer view. Soon the faces of men could be distinguished in the front; then the Persian made out the device of the ensign to be that of

Nimrod encountering the Lion, the symbol of the Assyrian sovereignty. The two hidden travellers were much perplexed at the appearance of this little army marching through the Median territory with their backs to the rebels.

They afterwards learned that Arbaces, in declaring the independence of Media, had magnanimously proclaimed that all Assyrians located in Media, and all other strangers who preferred the service of the Assyrian King, were at liberty to march out of the country, with their arms and ensigns, on taking oath never to fight against the Medians. Thus Arbaces trusted to rid his country of all who were unfriendly to his cause ; so that, in marching towards Nineveh, he might leave no enemies in his rear. Then he doubted not that should he fail to overthrow the Assyrian empire, yet he would be able to hold the several mountain passes which were the gate-ways to Media, against all external attack.

In due time this Assyrian legion had marched past the spot where Addin and the Persian lie hidden ; the rear being closed by the commander and his aids. While the attention of our travellers was fixed upon this group they observed that the chief looked sternly towards a spot not far from their place of concealment, and, pointing thereto, said to a young warrior near him :

"The Mede, though a rebel, is a noble foe ; but there hides a cowardly Hebrew slave who must needs shout for rebellion. Slay me the dog."

The warrior darted from the group with his drawn sword, and the rest passed on.

These words of the Assyrian sounded so applicable to Addin and his companion, that although the eye of the captain had not met theirs, and he had pointed aside from them, they believed themselves discovered, and drawing their swords assumed an upright attitude of defence without moving from their position. The first few moments while they awaited the onslaught appeared to them a long time ; yet no enemy approached, nor could they hear the sound of his steps, through the greater noise of the receding march. For some minutes they waited in suspense, ten times longer in their estimation than in fact, when the sounds of the march growing fainter, they heard near them the clashing of swords. Addin immediately sprang forward, without caution or care of consequences, to witness or take part in the fray, and beheld, to his astonishment, his dear friend and companion, his beloved Camon, just yielding beneath the sword of the Assyrian. In an instant Addin sprang upon the victor with such unexpected force that the Assyrian was thrown to the ground, and disarmed, before he even took in a full glance of his new enemy. Addin immediately called the Persian to guard the prostrate assassin, while himself ran to attend his fallen friend, who was mortally wounded and had fainted.

"Oh, Camon ! Camon !" cried he, bitterly, supposing his friend to be dead, "my delay has murdered thee."

Addin's manhood gave way as he held the dear bleeding form in his arms, and he wept and said, "Oh that my life could have been

given for thine—my life and my kingdom—rather than thou hadst been slain thus.”

The tears of Addin plentifully bedewed the pale face of Camon, and while the weeper yet gazed upon the dear lineaments, the lips moved, and the chest heaved a great sigh. Then Addin joyfully hoped that his friend might yet live, and laying him gently down, ran and fetched water to aid his revival.

At length Camon opened his eyes, and seeing Addin bending over him, said feebly, “What, my dear Prince, have I found thee at last, that I may die in peace? I thank Heaven for this much-desired mercy. I have sought thee sadly and wearily, and was now turning to continue my search in Media, when this evil suddenly befel me—yes, I remember; this unhappy man was sent to slay me, and by the permission of Heaven has prevailed.”

“But, my dear friend and brother, Heaven also willed that I should deliver thee; fear not that thy enemy shall further harm thee: he shall die.”

“Nay, my Prince, as you would have my dying blessing, spare him. He did but obey his commander, and is, himself, guiltless of my death. ‘Thou wilt pardon him at the request of thy dying friend?’”

“Say not that thou art dying, O my friend! Thou must live to be my brother, my dear companion, and my counsellor. Say not that thou art dying!”

And again Addin wept when he perceived that whatever Camon might say, the hand of death was evidently upon him, and the fatal seal on his handsome and noble countenance. The afflicted Prince had never known, until now, how dear to him was his life-long companion; ever so disinterestedly devoted to him, and ever so loving and wise in counselling him. The young Assyrian, too, who was still guarded by the Persian, shewed much emotion at the scene which he had caused, and now witnessed. At first, while under the threat of Addin’s vengeance, he evinced proud indifference. But when he heard the dying victim demand pardon and safety for his assassin, his pride yielded to feelings of keen remorse that his hand had dealt the death-blow, unprovoked, to one so noble and generous under mortal wrong. Then he shared the affliction of Addin, and said:

“I repent that I have been the instrument of this cruel deed, and consent to die at thy hand without resistance, to avenge thee and thy friend; even though I did but a soldier’s duty in obeying my commander.”

“Nay,” said Camon, “I pray you, my Prince, to free him at once from all restraint, and without hurt. It is God’s mysterious will that I should die. I freely forgive the instrument of my death, and so must thou, my Prince.”

Addin’s sternness was now all too much melted with sorrow at his friend’s condition, and the desire to do his will, to resist longer his pleading for the young Assyrian, whose penitence and sorrow were also evidently heartfelt. He therefore desired the Persian to liberate the captive, that he might begone, but to withhold his sword.

“Generous strangers,” said the Assyrian, “let me yet stay, I pray

you, and do what I can to repair the mischief of my hand. It is reported of me that I am at least as able in healing wounds as in dealing them. Permit me to stay the bleeding of your side," addressing Camon, "and to dress it with a precious and comforting ointment which I carry with me, and I pray the beneficent Hea that your life may yet be spared."

"Do so, for I grow very faint," assented Camon. And, presently, under the handling of the Assyrian, Camon again swooned, as if he had suddenly died. But water being again applied to his temples, and to his lips, signs of life returned, although he remained apparently unconscious; or in a sleep so deep that Addin's exclamations of grief did not arouse him.

When at length he did awake, and recognised Addin bending over him, he said, "Stay your grief my dear friend, or at least grieve not for me, for the glories of Heaven are dawning upon me. But grieve for thyself, and for thy people, and for the whole earth, for great woe and desolation shall I leave behind me. As for thyself, beware of Asmodeus; remember thy dream of Sara and the garden, and beware. O Addin, I have just seen that great trouble which is about to befall the nations. The Assyrian army marches like a destroying simoom. The hundred fair cities of the Euphrates are overthrown, and their inhabitants put to the sword, or enslaved. At length the King of Assyria marches to the land of the Jordan, scorching up and slaying as he goes. The God of Israel has ordained him the scourge of the wicked. The fenced cities of Judah and Ephraim fall into his hands, and the slaughter is great. The streams are red with the blood of our people, and the holy river is polluted. Hezekiah's kingdom is limited to the city of David, and the King trembles in his stronghold on the rock of Moriah. The Assyrian passes as a whirlwind against the hosts of Egypt, and they are scattered like chaff. And now the King of Assyria deems himself a god, and is puffed up. He returns to take Hezekiah, and declares that the Most High shall not hold Jerusalem from him. His blasphemy has reached Heaven, and his doom is pronounced. Now, O see! a mighty judgment. The camp of the Assyrians is pitched against the city of the Levites, and there the army is struck by the angel of God, and it is the camp of the dead. The King, and his guards, and the camp-followers, alone are spared, that the pride of the King may be humbled, and his glory be turned to shame in his own city. With his few he hastens to Nineveh, and enters his city abashed. The anger of the God of Israel still pursues him, and lo! assassins—his own sons—slay him before the image of his own god!"

Camon now paused exhausted. Presently he resumed in a feeble voice:

"My vision of the troubled world is ended. And now farewell my dear Prince. A path of indescribable heavenly glory is becoming more and more distinct before me, while the past is like the fading of an unhappy dream."

He spoke no more; but dozed off into death without struggle or sign of pain, his countenance stamped with the smile of holy peace.

So died Camon; and even the Persian and the Assyrian wept. The remorse of the latter was so heartfelt that when Addin restored his sword he snapped it at the hilt, and swore by Hea, that he would never more use any weapon against fellow man, even though the King should command him; but would ever seek to atone this cruel homicide by exercising his skill to heal.

When they had laid the body of Camon in a cavern, and raised upon it a mound of earth and stones, and closed the entrance with great masses of rock, Addin and the Persian sadly resumed their journey eastward, while the Assyrian turned towards the North, hoping to avoid the armies of the King and his allies, and escape into Armenia.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE RETURN OF RAGUEL.—EDNA'S SCHEMES IN FAVOUR OF BENAMMI.
—MARS SEEKS TO WIN THE FAVOUR OF VENUS.—GENII PUT TO
FLIGHT.



AT about this time Raguel, the third and last of the followers of the phantom of Sara, was restored to his wife and daughter in the castle of Benammi, whose servants had overtaken him returning towards Ecbatana. Hopeless of overtaking his daughter in the wilderness in which he appeared to have lost her, he had yet hoped that, under the protection of Addin and Camon, she might reach Ecbatana. Thitherward also he had judged that his wife and Miriam would proceed by some chance guidance. His delight at the re-union with his family, through the efforts of Benammi, was not unmixed with alarm when he found that he and his young companions had been the victims of an enchantment; and he wondered with dread what might be the purpose of the strange delusion, and what might yet be its consequences.

Thus the ardent wish of Sara was realized, and she hoped that, now her father was restored to them, they would immediately resume their journey homeward. But such was not the hope nor purpose of Edna. She seconded the entreaty of their host and his sister, that Raguel would remain a few days to rest and recover from the fatigue and excitement of his late adventures.

For a day or two no mention was made to Raguel of the plans which were engrossing the thoughts of Edna and Zabina. It was thought desirable to impress him, first, with the amiability and nobleness of Benammi, and the importance of his possessions, before hinting at the matrimonial scheme, which they hoped, waited only the father's sanction to be consummated. And Edna, having so lately worked for the alliance of her daughter with Prince Addin, was somewhat ashamed hastily to make it known, even to her husband, that she had abandoned that cause, so abruptly and completely, in favour of a later but richer acquaintance. But it happened on the third day after Raguel's return that he, unwittingly, gave Edna an opportunity of introducing in conversation the subject uppermost in her mind.

"I am anxious to learn," said Raguel, "what can have become of our two noble young friends. I find my mind still confused in its recollections of the harassing adventures of the last few weeks. Sometimes, even here, with our Sara under the same roof, I find myself wondering whether Addin has rescued her from the Assyrian, and

whether they have proceeded together towards Ecbatana. I marvel at that phantom and its purpose. Had I alone seen it I could have thought myself deceived by an unhealthy imagination. But we all three saw it ; Addin first, then Camon, then myself. I pray God we may be protected from evil enchantments ! Yet the evil, if any, appears to have been intended for our companions, who have been led away by it ; since we are all here, re-united and well. Perhaps it is some snare of the Evil One, set to draw away our Prince from his important part in the attempt to restore Israel."

"I should rather," said Edna, "have judged the contrary ; since you tell me that the rising in Media has really commenced. If the allurements were intended for Addin at all, I should judge that it was the device of a good spirit, to draw him from the indolence of love, to the care and activity of war. For has he not been drawn from idle attendance upon our daughter, into the strife of the world, where he has his part to perform ? Be assured he will have learned what is stirring, and has already found his way to the army of our people, to lead them to liberty. Besides, this reminds me to tell you my thoughts. I believe his enticement hence has been the work of Providence, as much in behalf of our daughter and us, as of himself and captive Israel. You know that, at first, I was gratified at the Prince's admiration of Sara ; but since I have had leisure, here, to think more calmly, while waiting in daily anxiety at your absence, I think I have arrived at a better judgment. It would not be well that our daughter should be wedded to one whose fortunes are all so desperate ; and who, at the best, must long be engaged in the rude hardships of war, and travel ; nor for years gain time to indulge in the sweets and peace of domestic happiness. Sara is our only child, and, I think, we should seek for her a married life of more comfort, security, and tranquility, than could fall to her lot as the wife of a warrior, challenging all the risks of contest for a throne, against so powerful an empire as Assyria. I would, indeed, that we could be restored to our beloved Thisbe : and how my soul yearns to tread, once more, the dewy slopes of my dear native mountain of Hermon ! But, mark what I say, Raguel ; all my devoted love of my dear country does not blind me to the perils—even the hopelessness—of this conspiracy against Nineveh ; which, instead of raising Prince Addin to a throne, is more likely to lead him to his death ; or, if he escape, it will probably be to hide during the remainder of his days among outlaws and robbers. A share of such fate must not be our daughter's prospect. We must no longer associate her name with that of the adventurous Prince Addin."

"But, my dear Edna, this reasoning is all too late. It was but lately your urgent advice to me to command our daughter to yield her hand to this noble Prince, although she declared her aversion to him as a lover. Then I hesitated to compel her by my authority. But since, in the moment of her supposed peril, I have given her to Addin, to increase his interest in her rescue ; and have confirmed the gift with an oath."

"Given her?—alas!—and sworn it? O precipitate folly ! But

why then does he not come to claim her, seeing he was so ardent? Perhaps," she continued, in a more composed tone, "he has already been slain in battle, or fallen into the hands of the Assyrians, who will shew no quarter to revolted captives. Tell me, Raguel, how you came so freely to give this promise; when even I, before, could not obtain it for him, even though it concerned my own child."

"It was given in a moment of anguish, when I believed I saw my daughter being carried off in lewd arms. To spur Addin to her salvation I swore she should be his wife, even a sacrifice to him, in meed for her delivery from a more horrid compulsion."

Then Raguel left his wife musing, and soon she imparted to Zabina this new impediment to the progress of their plans.

"Does Sara love the young Prince?" asked Zabina.

"She would rather die than become his bride. She loves him only as the native and lawful Prince of her people, and her brave champion. I am sure she would not, of her own will, give her hand to him in exchange for the crown and kingdom of Israel."

"Then my brother may yet win her. Her father's promise was given in a moment of terror and delusion. She was to be the meed of a rescue, which the Prince has never accomplished, and which Sara did never need."

"Yet am I sure that no reasoning will induce my husband to retract the promise, which he has sealed with an oath, while the Prince lives to claim it. I know him well."

"And yet do I not despair of obtaining Sara as my sweet sister," replied Zabina.

Sara's unwillingness to remain at the castle of Benammi was now shared by Raguel, when he discovered that his wife sought the accomplishment of plans opposed to his sacred bond with the Prince of Israel. On the morrow, therefore, in the presence of his wife and daughter, and the lady Zabina, he begged Benammi to permit him to depart for Ecbatana. Then Benammi sent for one of his servants, and caused him to repeat tidings which he had brought in that morning, to the effect that in consequence of the revolt of Media, the whole country, eastward, was in a state of lawless confusion; and that the passes were all occupied by the troops of Arbaces, who was marching with a great army towards Nineveh; and that thus it would be unsafe for travellers, and especially women, to venture abroad.

"Then," said Edna, "we have further cause to thank Heaven that, during these troubled times, we find ourselves all re-united under the protection of so powerful a Lord, in his castle of safety. In all this I trace the visible hand of Providence."

But Sara only wept. Then Benammi advanced to her, and taking her hand, which she withheld not, said, addressing Zabina, "My sister, learn for me what we can further do to make this our poor abode less tedious to the fair daughter of our friends. Assure her that here she is safe; and shall not only be protected by us, but shall command us. The King of Assyria expects that I shall raise my dependents, and lead them to the standard of the Lion-slayer. He commanded me to join him with my following at Sepharvaim; he

expects that I am now following him to Babylon, which he has taken. And there might I have added immensely to my power and wealth. But Sara detained me, and now Sara shall command here. My forces shall be immediately assembled, and shall aid the cause which she favours. When the Medes and their allies approach, I will join the Prince of Israel." Then, addressing Sara, he continued, "Lady, why should you weep at your detention here, when it gains for you, and for your sake alone, an ally to your Prince, your own brave champion?"

"O I fear that I am indeed too unmindful. Pardon me, my Lord. I am ever sorrowful of heart; yet I should rejoice at the deliverance of my people by their noble Prince. But why do I say *my* people? and why do you, my Lord, ascribe to me the credit of your aid to your own cause? Are not you also of the kindred of our oppressed people? And may you not aid your people, and your Prince, without counting it a boon to me?"

"To be reminded that I am of the kindred of Sara awakens in me, to-day, a new pride of birth, and secures my power to Prince Addin," replied the host.

All this time Benammi had retained the hand of Sara. He now pressed it with an unwonted warmth, and gazing into her eyes, as he uttered the last sentence, conveyed to them an electric language, which would have thrilled with joy a maiden willing to be pleased; but which was as distasteful and unwelcome to the chaste widowed soul of the daughter of Raguel, as a lewd declaration. The pressure and the gaze lasted but a moment, and the hand was released. The gaze was but as a dart feebly thrown against a shield of impenetrable steel.

Then asked Raguel, "Have you then tidings of the Prince of Israel, my Lord, and his friend my kinsman, in connection with this rising? I feared the Prince had been drawn aside from his high command, by the delusive enchantment of which we were joint victims."

"I have learned that Prince Addin is with the army of Arbaces, but have not heard that his friend is with him." Then Benammi told his latest tidings of the victorious marches of Sennacherib, who was now in possession of Babylon. He also spoke of the escape of Merodach-Baladan from his guards, at which the King was greatly angered, and had punished his negligent servants with death. "And now," said Benammi, "as we live in times of war, we will arm our followers, the occupiers of our lands, and look to their discipline. To-morrow we will review what forces we may be able to place under the banner of Ephraim."

"Then, to-morrow," whispered Zabina to Edna, "your daughter will behold an object of admiration in my brother, if anything human can move her to admire; yes, or anything godlike; for Benammi in arms is a god of war, the thrill of whose martial majesty no heart of woman can resist."

And, now, on every side went forth riders, to sound through all the land of Benammi the muster call of the trumpet; and adjoining the castle a camp was speedily pitched, which in the course of the day became as a hive of bees with busy preparations for the morrow.

Zabina had expressed to Edna her confidence in Benammi's conquest of the heart of Sara on the morrow; but Edna saw not how that much-desired success could avail their purposes, while Addin still lived to claim the fulfilment of Raguel's oath.

Sara, on the other hand, impressed with the change of Benammi's manner towards her, from extreme modesty to offensive boldness, became alarmed, and distrustful of him.

In the morning she awoke with a scream, and in great terror, from having dreamt that she was in a castle of enchantment, the prisoner of Asmodeus. The effects of the dream, however, were soon dispelled when Miriam, hastening to her, assured her that she was safe and in a real castle, with her own Miriam; and that her parents were in an adjoining apartment. Also that she was now awaked from a terrible, but baseless, imagination, to the realities of a pleasant day of entertainments.

The morning was brilliant and delightful, and, already, they could hear the various noises of the camp, the shouts of men, and the neighing and stamping of horses, mingled with strains of martial music.

Miriam looked forth upon the glorious confusion of brilliant costumes, arms and armour of men and horses, rich tents and fluttering ensigns; but, above all was she struck with the dignity and beauty of the animated part of the scene.

"O come, my mistress!" she exclaimed, after awhile, "and see here the most noble sight in the world."

Sara looked, and beheld the young lord Benammi, just issued from the castle, and advancing towards the camp. He was mounted upon a great horse of magnificent form and action, very richly caparisoned, and attended by a staff of chosen warriors, yet among whom himself was conspicuously the most noble. He was, indeed, as Zabina had foretold to Edna, superior to human nobility, and seemed, and indeed was, a god in arms.

Yet was Sara's heart unmoved, except with feelings of increased concern and apprehension; with a fear of some indistinct impending evil.

During that morning Edna could speak little else in the ears of Sara than praises of their noble host, and of the great influence which Sara had gained over him, even to the regulation of all his actions. She dwelt especially on his magnanimity in offering, through a desire to please Sara, his services to the Prince of Israel, whom, naturally, one in the position of Benammi would be supposed to hate.

"And why, dear mother, should Benammi hate the Prince, who is of his own race, and never did him injury?"

"You are ignorant of the natures of men, my daughter. Have you been so perversely blind, all these many days, as not to have admitted to your own heart, that the lord of this rich castle and these fair lands, one who is ten times more a Prince than Addin—the grand and noble chief of this brilliant gathering of warriors, who, to-day, will pay you homage—do you profess not to know that this great man loves you with more than ordinary love?—loves you so that, while

yearning towards you, he yet worships you as a revered idol; and hence you see more of his modest respect, than his ardent love? How great and noble must be the soul of such a man, when, notwithstanding that jealousy which such a love must breed towards a rival, Benammi gathers all his power to befriend and exalt this rival; because he hopes, thereby, to perform Sara's will. And you are also his first and only love."

"O my mother! is it even so? O let us fly from this place. Better risk the incivility of rude soldiers on our journey, than stay here. Pity and help your own child, dear mother. My soul trembles all this day. Let us begone. Do not dissuade my father."

And Sara wept on her mother's neck as she spoke.

"Alas! my poor foolish child," was the brief reply of Edna, as Miriam advanced to comfort Sara. Miriam observed to Edna that her mistress had awoke unwell from the terrors of an alarming dream; but she believed that, as the day wore on with its novel entertainments, her heart would strengthen and gain cheer—especially in witnessing the evolutions of that brilliant little army which was to aid in the deliverance of Israel from captivity.

While Miriam spoke, Zabina entered the apartment, and asked permission for her brother, who had returned from the camp, to speak with Sara respecting the arrangements for the approaching review. Sara was silent; but Edna answered that her daughter was ready to receive the young Lord. When Benammi had entered, and a few words of greeting were passed, Edna arose and beckoned Miriam away; but Sara detained her maid, as Zabina also had retired.

Benammi was still in his military costume. His steel helm, and cuirasse, and greaves, were embossed with devices in gold. His vermilion skirt was besprinkled with golden lions rampant. His sword-handle and scabbard glistened, richly, with precious stones. But the person which these adornments graced, yet more graced these adornments, with more than manly beauty and dignity. His mien was such as most stirs the hearts of women with admiration. He seemed to personate the Asshur of the Assyrians; or the young Mars of the Greeks studying to win the heart of Venus. He observed that Sara trembled, and desired her maid to remain with her, and remarked:

"Does my fair guest distrust Benammi? O teach me how to calm this fear; and to speak, and act, strictly in accordance with your pleasure. But let Miriam remain; nothing shall be uttered that a mistress may not be proud for her maiden to hear. Sara, I come to ask you to prepare to receive the homage of all my people, who are about to march forth to fight for you as their liege mistress. And, O fairest of women, their leader, also, sues to be permitted to be your servant for ever."

Sara's trembling ceased. She grew firm and stern, as one nerved for an inevitable contest. She felt that she had been thus sued before, but the recollection was indefinite and confused.

"My Lord," she said, "this manner is sudden. Let it suffice for answer that I am a poor sorrowful maiden, who can never more rejoice in the love and service of man; and that I must, immediately,

leave this hospitable place, where I and my parents have already accumulated too great a debt."

"Say not so, fair lady. Truly the debt can only be repaid by accepting more—by accepting all. All here is thine, and Benammi is thy slave."

"My Lord, I pray you press me no further; it would be unkind. My will is unalterable in this matter; and my heart wholly immoveable."

"Yet, fair and noble maiden, I will not despair of winning by my patient and devoted services, thine own will and wish to accept my love, even while thy heart shall continue to hold out. Then shall thyself add eloquent pleading to my pleading for the yielding of the heart also."

"Let us cease this vain discourse. To further importune me, after what I have said, would be unworthy a true man."

"Nay, fair lady; in such a tender contest it is permitted ever to strain courtesy with persistent courtesy. Is it not said that with the besiegement of the heart, as with the besiegement of a city, all is fair that shall lead to capture?"

Sara started up as one amazed, at these words uttered by the erewhile modest Benammi. In her mind suddenly opened up an indistinct vista of retrospect. The crowded scene of the recent past was all suddenly illumined with a new light of suspicion. In its rapid details, readable by a mental glance at the whole, she perceived a plot, yet dared not believe her own conclusions.

"Now that, my Lord," she said, "is but the wily proverb of the dishonourable libertine; who thereby only avows himself an armed robber, set in treacherous ambush against the innocent and feeble. For the besiegers of a city are open and known enemies to its inhabitants; who are, themselves, furnished with arms and defences; while you would assail innocence with subtleties, the feeble with treachery, the unsuspecting with lies."

She paused for a moment; but still in the attitude to continue; while Benammi gazed upon the fair declaimer with looks of rapture, and, merely uttering the word "Magnificent!" bent before her, and attempted to seize her hand. Her adverse will, however, restrained him, so that he could not touch it, and she continued, still gazing upon him:

"But the Holy One is the shield of the innocent. The seducer and the liar are His abomination."

We have already alluded to the habitual incredulousness of some persons in all matters of enchantment; and in the marvellous things which happened when angels appeared to men, and unholy genii roamed the earth. These things are discredited by the sceptical, because they do not happen in our time, and because they are too marvellous for human comprehension. If we must refuse credence to whatever is beyond our comprehension, we must refuse to believe that we live, because of the mystery of the principle of Life and Consciousness; or in Time, because it is inseparable from incomprehensible Eternity; or in Space, because it leads on inevitably to

incomprehensible infinite Boundlessness. It is no more difficult to comprehend the sudden creation, or disappearance, of the castle of Benammi in the wilderness of Assyria, or the still more wonderful genie-raised palace of the son of Mustapha in China, than to comprehend the creative power of Imagination, the seeming realities of a gorgeous and original dream. I have already said that to doubt these things, simply because they do not continue to happen in our time, is as reasonable as to doubt that pre-Adamite monsters ever existed, because they are now extinct. They, being physical creatures, left their bones in evidence that they had existed, or the mere tradition that they had inhabited this earth would have been deemed as fabulous as the record of the existence and deeds of genii. We say again, however, with Josephus, "As to these matters, let everyone look upon them as he thinks fit."

It is recorded that when Sara uttered these words there immediately came upon the scene a complete and oppressive darkness; and, unpreceded by lightnings, there pealed forth unnatural continuous thunderings; so awful that it seemed that heaven and earth were breaking up in one general ruin. There were also heard terrible cries, as of many evil genii flying in pain and terror from the Avenger. The thunder gradually rolled towards the North, the cries receding with it, and the light of day re-appeared, to reveal the scene all changed. The strong castle, with all its grandeur, wealth, and inhabitants; the camp, with all its active life, and brilliant warlike pomp of men and steeds, were dissolved and utterly gone. In their place was restored the natural, silent wilderness. The only human beings present were the family of Hebrew captives: Sara, standing with an expression of terror; while at her feet Miriam had swooned outright. At a short distance Edna, lying upon the earth in the same condition as Miriam, while over her stood her husband, in bewildered astonishment at so awful and marvellous a change. Galloping towards him, in affright, Raguel perceived his horse, and the mules of the women, the only other creatures left of all that grand wreckage of enchantment.

Thus had the plan of Damish the genie failed; and Asmodeus was once more driven to his subterranean palace, utterly defeated and shamed by the virtue of Sara.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ADDIN AND THE PERSIAN OVERTAKE ARBACES THE MEDE.—THE DISASTER OF THE CAPRUS PASS.—ADDIN DISCOVERS RAGUEL AND HIS FAMILY, AND SAFEGUARDS THEM THROUGH THE MEDIAN CAMP.—THE MORNING CHANT OF THE MAGI.—SARA AND HER PARENTS PROCEED TOWARDS ECBATANA.



HE Persian and the Prince, having overtaken Arbaces the Mede, long before the van of his army had reached the Caprus Pass, were in time to warn him of the secret expedition advancing against him under Belib, and to inform him of the events which had happened near Babylon. Then Arbaces conceived that he might catch the Assyrians in their own trap, and accelerated the advance of his host. Meantime this news was kept profoundly secret, that the Medes might not be discouraged by the fate of the southern rebellion.

Now the Pass of the Caprus was, in general features, similar to that through which Addin had travelled into the plains of Dura, before he met the Persian. It was a great ravine cut across and severing a range of mountains ; it was strewn with great and small loose rocks ; its steep sides were pierced with many caverns, one above another, and were, in other places, channelled with bounding cascades ; and its bottom was the trough of a rapid river, for the streams of the eastern watershed here united into one thread, and flowed on through the ravine, westward, towards the Tigris. There were several such passes in this land of mountain chains ; and, as their similarity may surprise some readers, we will account for it by explaining their general origin, thus :

In that far back geological period, when the plains of Asia were yet the sea-bottom, and the tops of the mountains only were exposed above the water as islands, the lowest saddles, or depressions in the ranges became the channels of the tidal flow ; and were gradually so worn by the rush of the waters to and fro, age after age, that, while the ridges, generally, rose higher and higher above the receding sea, these depressions remained the sea channels, and were still worn down as the waters still gradually shallowed ; until at length, in the course of geological ages, complete ravines were cut to the level of the sea-bottom, and the mountains were severed. During this process, wherever the composition of the exposed ravine sides was soluble, or softer than the general rock of which the mountains were formed, the restless waters washed it out, and left hollow caves and irregularities of surface.

And here, where sea monsters once lurked for their passing prey men were now about to lie in ambush for fellow men. Where, of old, the tides found rapid passage from sea to sea, the lighter fluid of the atmosphere now ever rushes with varying violence from plain to plain. Once sea-gates, these passes are now wind-gates; for when the air to the East and West of the mountain walls is comparatively calm, there is the rush of a tempest through these ravines. And they are still also water passages; although the once sea-channel is now only traversed by a narrow river, which, stretching south-westward across the plain, flows into the Tigris. When we say "now" we mean at the period of the incidents of this chapter. And should the reader ever wander over the scenes of these events let him not be surprised if he should find the features of the country somewhat altered from our description. Although the two thousand six hundred years which have elapsed since the reign of Sennacherib, are, truly, but a geological day, yet that long day has not been unattended with its changes and effects. It has been a changeful and stormy day. Its hot sun has dried up streams. Its simoom has choked up their channels; changed the face of the desert, and destroyed, and scattered in dust, the structures erected by the human ants. Its lightnings and earthquakes have shattered mountains. Its thunderstorms have produced new streams in new courses. To drop metaphor: Rivers which retain their ancient names, no longer flow in their ancient beds, having been diverted by volcanic upheavings or depressions, and other more gradual causes. Other rivers have been for ever dried up. Ancient mountains have been worn by time and tempest, and their outlines changed. New hills have been upheaved from the plain. Populous cities, the foundations of whose sites were volcanic bubbles, have sunk, and become the beds of deep lakes. Others, whose walls and forts and palaces were erected by imperial wealth and might, to last for ever, are now erased, or their chief glories are only indicated on the desert plain by, here and there, a smooth flowery mound. We start from this reverie.

Arbaces having reached the Pass with his army, long before the scouts of the Assyrians had approached, he placed men, who were expert either with the bow, the javelin, or the sword, and armed with all three, in all the highest caverns and places of concealment; and, having instructed his captains how they were to act, he placed the most trusty of his people at the western end, towards Nineveh, to prevent anyone who might be treacherous in heart from deserting to warn the Assyrians. He also employed trusty and cunning spies to bring him tidings when the Assyrians should draw near. Having completed his arrangements in the Pass, and instructed all his officers in their duties, he withdrew, and, with the remainder of his army, encamped at the eastern end of the ravine. In the course of time some Assyrian scouts entered the Pass, there being nothing apparent to warn them of any danger. They were allowed to proceed some distance, when they were taken and led before Arbaces, who learned from them that the approaching army was not the expected army of Belib, but another, direct from Nineveh, led by Prince Sharezer.

This Prince, ambitious to strike the Mede before the arrival of Belib, had marched forward forty thousand chosen fighting men, of the garrison of Nineveh ; consisting of charioteers, cavalry, and footmen in due proportions, and a great number of Assyrian knights.

Unconscious of danger, since the scouts had not returned to give warning, the Assyrians defiled into the Pass ; and, when they were fairly in the trap, the Medes, at given signals, discovered themselves above, with shouts that outnoised the roar of the cascades, and used their bows and javelins, and hurled down great stones upon the Assyrians with terrible effect. As many of the chariots as they chose they broke with great fragments of rock, and so blocked up the Pass that those of the chariots which they spared could not be extricated by the Assyrians, and they were abandoned. At the same time Arbaces pressed forward upon the van of the panic-stricken Assyrians, and a fearful slaughter followed. The royal leader, with only a small remnant of his horsemen, he being in the rear, emerged from the ravine, and fled back towards Nineveh. And his flight was further dishonoured by the loss of his ensign. The Medes pursued him ; but, when they had reached the open plain, the superiority of the Assyrian horses rendered pursuit vain, and Sharezer escaped.

The Pass was now strewn with wounded and slain Assyrians and horses, and with chariots ; and the river came out into the plain of a crimson colour, carrying with it bodies of the slain and pieces of broken chariots, which, floating away across the plain into the Tigris, would give rise to excited conjectures among the inhabitants of the many cities near which that river flowed.

Thus the Medes, in their first encounter with their late masters, by cunning and good fortune, or by the favour of God, dealt them a terrible blow, and took great spoil. Having no use for the captured chariots in the present campaign, Arbaces sent them to Ecbatana, laden with arms, armour, and other trophies. Also he returned with them a great number of his Median horses, replacing them in his cavalry with the superior horses of the Assyrians. Also the tents, camp furniture, and other baggage of the Assyrians, he sent to the Median capital, with a long train of carts and mules. The prisoners and wounded they slew, except those of superior rank, whom they carried into the caverns, and tended with care, reserving them for ransom.

Arbaces saw that it would be no longer possible, with those terrible warnings all in view, in the river and the ravine, to decoy the second Assyrian army into the ambush, which had been employed so successfully against the first. Otherwise Arbaces did not doubt that he would have entrapped a more vigilant general than Prince Sharezer had proved to be ; for by occupying only the higher caverns, and leaving the lower void, he expected to have outwitted the Assyrian, should he also have thought to plant an ambush there.

The success already obtained, however, inspired the Mede with confidence in the results of a battle in the open field. Prince Addin, who had distinguished himself in the recent rout, even advised that they should, at once, cross the river and advance to meet Belib,

whose army could not be far off, and give him battle while the courage and ardour of the Medes were exalted with victory. But to this counsel Arbaces objected that the day was too far advanced, and it would be more to the advantage of his army to fight the second battle, with renewed strength, on the morrow.

"Then, at least," said Addin, "let us cross the river while we may, and encamp on the southern bank, that the stream may not flow as a barrier before us when the enemy is in sight."

"Nay, my gallant Prince, you are ever for a clear path to your foe ; but I prefer that the river flow between us and Belib to-night ; and trust to leave to him the trouble and loss of crossing it, ere he reach us, to-morrow. We have gained one cheap victory and I would gain another ; without exposing one man needlessly, although we are superior in numbers to the army of Belib. We shall need all our power yet, and that of all our allies who yet keep the field, to take the capital. Note this, Prince ; the Assyrians, flushed with their great victory over Merodach-Baladan, and fresh from the glance of Sennacherib, will despise us ; and, as I hope, not hesitate to cross the river before our faces, to attack us hand to hand. This I shall encourage them to do, and hope therefrom to obtain great advantage."

Arbaces then arranged the encampment of the army for the night, still leaving a strong force in possession of the ravine, and planned his order of battle for the morrow. Twelve thousand of his soldiers, with their officers, he disguised as Assyrians, with the armour and arms of the slain ; and, placing them under the captured standard of Prince Sharezer, ordered them to be prepared to march and encamp in the night, a short distance from the main camp towards Nineveh, where they and their standard should be visible to Belib when he arrived at the river, and be mistaken for his friends, waiting to join in the attack upon the invaders.

In the evening Arbaces assembled in his tent the principal leaders of his forces, including Prince Addin, and communicated to them his plans.

Meantime he had sent scouts across the river to watch for the approach of Belib, and also far along the river-bank south-westward, that no detachment from the enemy might cross in secret, and advance on the Median flank, without his foreknowledge. Also towards Arbela and Nineveh he had despatched fleet and trusty horsemen, to watch that no surprise should happen from that quarter.

When Arbaces had exposed his plans to his confederate generals, all expressed their confidence of another complete victory.

"I trust, my Lord Arbaces," said Addin, "that you will be able to intercept the flight of even a single soldier to the protection of the walls of Nineveh ; for if only one escape of all the followers of Belib, I shall doubt it may be that one of whom I have spoken to you, against whom I have the most deadly feud that ever kept vengeance burning, and strengthened the arm in the day of battle."

"I shall look to that, Prince Addin. I am indeed desirous that none shall carry to Nineveh the tidings of our second victory, should Apollo again bless our arms, until we appear in force at its gates.

Therefore consider your special foe before you, yet unslain, while a single soldier of Belib's army lives. I look for a complete victory; but shall keep the Pass, as a secure retreat in case of disaster, either to-morrow or later. Even if Media fail to rule Assyria, I yet trust that never again shall Assyria rule Media. We have already dismissed the invaders, and secured every pass that leads from Assyria to our country. These gates being in our hands, its mountain walls are impregnable to armies."

"Let us never doubt," said another, "that we shall conquer Assyria. It is well that its King has withdrawn so many troops from the Capital—well both for him and for ourselves—for while we shall make an easier capture of Nineveh, its late King has with him the means to seize a new kingdom for himself, and may yet reign awhile in Babylon."

Addin was the last to leave the tent of Arbaces. At their parting the general said: "Go now, Prince, to your repose, and prepare your limbs for gallant deeds to-morrow against a worthy foe, the personal conqueror of Merodach-Baladan. Meantime dream in security of conquests in love and in war, while I order the completion of those stratagems that shall soon bring your enemies within the reach of your sword."

But in vain that night the young Prince sought the recommended repose. When he had retired into his tent his spirits became unusually depressed. Instead of dreaming of love and conquest, his wakeful thoughts were all of sorrow and death. With agony of mind he long dwelt on the mystery of Sara's disappearance. Then with tears he mourned the death of his dear friend Camon, and felt that his successes in battle, however great, would now lose half their value and glory in being achieved without the knowledge and applause of those lost loved ones. The last warning of dying Camon, too, came into his mind, with a foreboding force that overawed his proud spirit; and caused him to shudder with a new feeling of indefinite fear. That vision of Sara, guarded by the genie, which had been called to recollection by prophetic Camon's last breath, became magnified into new prominence and import. Yet, however painful the picture, he could not banish it from his mental view. Turn his thoughts in whatever direction he would, it was as though a torturing demon ever thrust it before him—or, rather, may it not have been an Angel of Light, or the spirit of Camon himself, pointing to this picture as a warning of impending danger? After his wanderings in search of his love, there, at last, he had discovered her, surpassingly beautiful, slumbering upon a bed of flowers. He had contemplated the lovely vision with an oppressed soul. It seemed that, although he had found her, he had now no part nor hope in her. He was tortured with a horribly combined sense of "all lost!" and intense jealousy. While he pondered upon the scene it grew more distinct and like reality. From a mere recollection it was changing into a repetition of the vision itself. He dozed into the dream, all distinctly repeated, with all its original horrors intensified. Without hope of share in that lovely sleeper, he approached to gaze, and feed his jealousy. Then

again appeared the terrible genie, and frowned upon the intruder like an angry god about to execute judgment. Addin found no power to fly; a fell enchantment held him in the place of horror and danger. A languor of frame and dimness of sight came over him. Then a sound of footsteps was heard, and both the genie and Addin looked, and beheld, approaching the sleeper, a fair youth. Addin remembered him as the same he had before seen in his former dream—one whose happy countenance was impressed with the favour of Heaven. The youth approached, and took the hand of the sweet sleeper, and awoke her. She fixed her gaze upon him with the response of happy love. The genie yelled with fury, and would have destroyed the youth; but the angel of God was at hand, and a celestial sword was drawn, before whose refulgence the genie fled.

A vivid flash of lightning appeared to have passed before the dim sight of Addin, reflected from the celestial blade; then he heard a terrible crash of thunder.

But the thunder was nature's own voice. Addin started from his brief troubled doze in the midst of the crash, and listened, while yet the mountains were hurling it back in deafening echoes. Thankful that the terrible charm was thus broken, he arose, and looked forth from his tent upon a brilliant and beautiful scene. The full moon floated in the western sky of perfectly clear deep azure; beautifully silvering the near mountain ranges and the extended camp; while to the east, over the mountains, the sky formed an intensely storm-dark background, giving the silvered ridges unusual distinctness. At the same time the night-stillness rendered audible the charm of the distant cascades of the Pass.

The thunder had startled and terrified every sleeper in the camp. After awhile, finding it was not repeated, and seeing from the openings in the tents that the night was brilliantly moonlit, many arose and went forth into the alleys of the camp. And soon there arose a buzz of subdued voices as the soldiers gathered in groups and discussed the omen. Most of them declared their belief that the thunder, being heard in the camp while the moon and the stars were shining upon it, was an augury favourable to the Medes. A few only, who always preferred to differ from the majority, shook their heads, and, pointing to the dark background of the silvered mountains, remarked that Heaven frowned ominously upon all the land of Media, while it smiled upon Assyria.

When Addin had viewed the scene awhile, and felt the refreshing air, he determined to risk no more, that night, the horrors of meditation or sleep. Supposing Arbaces to be roused like the rest of the camp, he walked towards his pavilion, which was close by. There he found the general still occupied with the details of his command.

"What think you, Addin, of this omen?" enquired Arbaces. "The Goddess of the night smiles upon our camp, while Heaven declares in thunder the fates of nations. Is not the omen in our favour?"

"It has indeed thundered," replied the Prince, "for I was awoke by it; and it was in my particular favour, for it broke the spell of a

horrid dream. And that is all the importance I attach to it, my Lord Arbaces. And it is, indeed, a beautiful moonlight night, pleasant to the restless who cannot sleep. Therefore I propose to ride forth for an hour to occupy and shorten the interval until sunrise."

"Do so, Prince; but go not far nor rashly. Remember that I count upon you, to-morrow, as my champion to fight Belib. Therefore I would rather you had been reposing."

"Nay, I will not risk sleep again until I have slain for you this Assyrian, if to-morrow you will entice him within the reach of my mace. For with a mace will I break his battle-axe and his helmet."

"Who is this," said a voice behind Addin, "that derides the thunders of the Supreme, and scorns the omens of the gods, yet boasts that he will overcome the mighty in war? Him shall the gods forsake in the battle, when the strong foe presses against him, and the hot battle-axe thirsts for his blood!"

Addin heeded not the censure, nor the threat; but Arbaces rose with respect, when he perceived that the chief of the Magi had entered his tent, at the heels of Addin.

"My Lord Arbaces," continued the priest, "it is a propitious moment to offer sacrifices and supplications to the Supreme, the Source of Heat and of Life. Fate holds the wavering balance till he nods his will. The impending destinies of the nations engage the gods in contest. Come forth, and, with awe, behold conflict in Heaven."

Arbaces followed the priest from the tent, and the latter pointed to the clear heavens, where bright meteors were darting across the deep azure; a sight at that time new to astronomers.

"See!" said the priest, "those are the celestial javelins of the gods, who fight from the stars, their bright abodes. There is war in Heaven over the affairs of men. Already the Thunderer has hurled his hot bolt in the contest, as thou hast heard. Henceforth expect to see the destinies of the nations and the rule of the gods changed by this celestial revolution. Let us offer sacrifices, and pray that the Supreme may ordain victory to the gods who protect Media and her allies, and bid the Fates register the overthrow of Assyria."

While Arbaces and the priest hastened to perform the Magian rites, the Hebrew Prince mounted his horse, and rode forth from the camp, with his sword girded. He felt drawn in the direction of Nineveh, because it was also the road to that memorable spot in the wilderness where he had kept such ineffectual guard over Sara, and lost her. He rode forward several miles, thinking principally of that event, and wondering what had become of Edna and Miriam, left so uncereemoniously to themselves in the desert; and of Raguel, whom he had outridden in the chase. He had already enquired of some of his people from Ecbatana, and learned from them that neither Raguel, nor his wife with the maid, had returned there.

Pondering on these things, he rode over the soft flowery turf, almost noiselessly. The moon was still shining in her full unveiled splendour, rendering the scene very distinct, and very charming to any mind unburdened with care and sorrow. Addin, however, could not enjoy it then. He was only abroad to seek motion, and kill time; to avoid

the painful solitude of his tent ; to outride the oppressive recollections—which yet so clung to his mind—of lost bride and lost friend. In vain he tried. He was even recalling that thrilling cry, “Addin ! save me !” in the beloved voice, startling him from his poetic love-reverie, when he perceived, at some distance before him, the appearance as of several dark objects emerging from among the trees, creeping on the earth towards him. He checked his horse, and gazed and listened. Presently his practised ear detected the dull sound of hoofs upon the turf. What he had taken for objects creeping upon the earth, were the advanced shadows of a horse, three mules, and their riders, whom he soon made out to be a man and three women, evidently no part of a hostile force. He waited in concealment to scan them more closely. Could he be yet dreaming? “Yes, surely,” thought he; for there were Raguel, Edna, Sara, and Miriam, as though they had never been separated ; as though Addin had not followed his betrothed many days’ journey towards Babylon, and left her far in advance of him, beyond rescue. He pressed his hand to his forehead in bewilderment, and approached the group ; to their sudden alarm at first, then great joy, when they discovered him to be their friend and defender. Sara had suffered so much terror recently, that she remembered him not then as a suitor, but as a safeguard to their perilous journey, whose courage and skill had been well tried. Raguel grasped him warmly by the hand, and said :

“I thank God, my Prince, that you are safely restored to us.”

Edna made a deep obeisance, with mingled feelings of satisfaction and shame.

Addin then turned back with them towards the Median camp, and, as they went, Raguel briefly related their marvellous adventures since his restoration to his family ; and he accounted for the phantom horseman and maiden as a stratagem of Asmodeus, to lure away the protectors of Sara, that she might be detained in the wilderness, exposed to his seductive arts. When these things had been mentioned Sara asked :

“Where is our kinsman Camon ? Is he also near us and safe ?”

“Alas !” replied Addin, in a troubled voice, “I have regained the dearest of those I have been mourning as lost ; but Camon can I never regain. He has been treacherously slain ; and in him we have lost the truest, wisest, and best of his race.”

His eyes sparkled with gathering tears as he spoke, and Sara wept outright at the sad news. Camon was high in her esteem ; for, by the little she had seen of him, she had found him a gentle, wise, and loveable youth.

By the time they had reached the Median camp the blackness was dispersed from the eastern sky, and the dawn began to be visible on the ridges of the mountains. Arbaces, the Magian priests, and the sacred singers and musicians, who were Hebrews, although engaged in idolatrous rites, were already ascending to a high point over the Pass, again to offer sacrifices as soon as the sun should appear above the horizon, and to hail him with hymns and sweet music.

Meantime the camp, and the plain before it, were all a scene of

warlike activity. Already thousands of troops were in motion, forming the order of battle which the general had communicated to his captains. For the Median scouts had returned, having sighted the distant fires of the Assyrians where they had encamped for the night; and an early engagement appeared imminent.

The Hebrew women, each, expressed to Addin their horror at the prospect of remaining in the camp, or near the battle; and Raguel joined with them in requesting to be sent on, at once, to their home, with a suitable guard, since Addin had the power to render them this service. And this request they urged, notwithstanding the assurances of the Prince that they would be perfectly safe under his protection, with a tent to themselves, and a guard, for he was unwilling to be again parted from Sara. Sara detected this motive; and it added greatly to her desire to place the mountains, not only between herself and the camp and the battle; but between her and her suitor. Her tears, only, were sufficiently persuasive, and, at their pleading, he at length chose an escort, and consented to their immediate departure. Himself accompanied them some distance into the Pass. The dawn of day was now just prevailing against the night, and there was silence among the soldiers who held the Pass, in respect to the approaching moment when their Solar Deity should be seen to rise by those who watched on the high places. Many faces were turned upward to the group, which stood prominent against the sky, waiting to hail the rising god. Our travellers, too, halted to watch the ceremony. They waited, not long, till the faces of the worshippers were illumined with the first direct rays of the sun. Then Arbaces knelt, and stretched forth his hands in prayer; the musicians played upon their instruments; and the singers commenced their chant thus:

“Hail, Supreme God! Source of Light,
Sole Revealer of the earth.
At thy uprising, O Most Glorious!
All Nature chants her joy
And owns thee God.
When thy face is hidden
Fear prevails, and deep Silence.
Without thee there is no Beauty,
No forms of loveliness, no glorious tints,
But only blank Desolation.

Hail, Divine Day-spring! Source of Heat,
Without thee the earth would be barren,
All life must perish,
All sweet Sounds cease;
The lakes and the rivers be changed to rock;
All sparkling fountains stopped;
Swift Gales and gentle Breezes still'd for ever.
Wherever thou art not, O God,
There is darkness and silence and death.

All hail, Most High! Source of Life,
Save thy people, O Most Mighty,
Inspire them with the Sacred Fire.
Fight for us, O Omnipotent,
Draw thy bow against the tyrant,
And destroy him before us with darts of fire.
Accept our sacrifices, O Supreme,

And deliver thy worshippers!
Scatter the worshippers of idols,
And give thy people victory!"

Thus sang the choristers of the Sun, apostate descendants of Aaron.

"Alas!" exclaimed Raguel, "why do we look for the deliverance of Israel? Our own brethren sing the idolatrous anthem. Was it not for sacrificing in high places, and worshipping the Sun and Fire, according to the customs of the heathen, that our nation was scattered? What trust have we, that the anger of the Most High is turned away from us, when, as a nation, we have not repented?"

"It is true, my father," replied Addin, "that at present the greater part of our people continue to conform to the religious customs of their neighbours. Yet have they somewhat improved in their worship, in discarding the golden calf and other images. When I gain my kingdom, I will act according to the example of the good King Hezekiah, and permit only the worship of the true God. At present it is, of course, impossible to enforce such an edict; nor would it be wise, now, even to speak openly against the worship of the Sun, to the offence of the Magi, and all our allies. But, when our land of Israel is recovered, the voices of the prophets shall be loud in all our cities."

The allusion to Hezekiah reminded Sara, keenly, of her great sorrow, brought about by that King's rigorous assertion of the ancient faith, and turning her head she wept.

The Prince detected her grief, and, attributing it to the pending separation, was consoled with the belief that her heart was warming towards him. It magnified his hope, and softened his sorrow at the parting.

Arbaces and his train had already begun to descend the mountain, when, the farewells over, Addin turned back towards the camp, with Sara's promise that she would ever pray for his success, and for the liberation of Israel from captivity. The horrible foreboding pictures and depressions of the night were now all cleansed from his mind. It is true that his recovered happiness was accompanied with a keenly painful regret that Camon was not there to sympathise in it, which drew again a tribute of tears to the memory of the beloved dead. But, as he re-entered his tent, his heart swelled with courage, ambition, and hope, and he ardently longed for the battle.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE CAPRUS.—THE DEATH OF PRINCE ADDIN.



FROM the high point where Arbaces had offered the morning sacrifice, he saw, on the distant plain, the army of Belib already moving towards him; and he had not long returned to the camp when the Assyrian vanguard became visible from thence also.

As soon as the Assyrian general discovered the Median encampment, he dashed forward on his charger, in advance of the army, followed by his staff and a few guards. At the bank of the river he stood awhile, surveying the enemy's preparations for battle. He then looked towards the Pass, where all was still, and not a soldier to be seen, as though not even a sentinel kept guard there. The river was no longer tinted with the blood of yesterday's slain, to excite his suspicions of yesterday's disaster to the arms of Assyria. Then his attention was drawn westward by the distant sounds of music proceeding thence. The air played was an Assyrian Triumph; and Belib beheld the little decoy army, encamped under the ensign of Prince Sharezer.

The Medes were counted too deficient in discipline, and their numbers not so great, as to cause anxiety to the future King of Babylon; and he commanded that his Assyrians should immediately commence to swim their horses across the river, covered by archers on the bank.

Meantime, that portion of the Median army with which Arbaces intended to commence the battle, was rapidly advanced to the field, between the Median camp and the river—the archers even to within the third of a bow-shot of the stream, leaving just room for the Assyrians to land. These archers, by shooting at the Assyrian horses while they were just emerging from the water, caused great loss to the enemy. For, so Arbaces had commanded, because they presented a broader and more vulnerable mark than their armed riders, and he judged that the wounding and slaying of the horses in the water would cause many of the riders to be drowned. Behind the Median archers were slingers, and behind the slingers were the cavalry, who at present took no part in the action; for it was not the purpose of the Median general to prevent the Assyrians from crossing the river, but only to inflict upon them some disheartening damage in the passage. And, even while the Assyrians were landing, the Median archers and slingers extended their line, right and left, and continued to annoy,

on each flank, those who were in the water, when the front was covered by those who had already landed.

Thus, at first, the passage of the river was attended with much loss to the Assyrians; but such was the courage and confidence of those who had gained the bank, that none wished himself back; nor did those who had yet to follow fear to plunge their horses into the stream, so expectant were they of an easy victory, when once in a position to march up to the Medes.

Belib, having left a trusty lieutenant to remain in the rear until the last Assyrian should enter the water, was early on the northern bank, arranging his men as they landed.

His troops consisting partly of cavalry and partly of mounted infantry, there was a horse to every soldier. For the defeat of the great armies of Merodach-Baladan and his allies had furnished Sennacherib with more horses than he had Assyrians to ride them; and, for the sake of expedition, he had mounted every soldier of Belib's command. Therefore, the Assyrian general cared not so much for the loss of horses in the passage of the Caprus, as for the drowning of so many of his heavily-armed soldiers, and he soon arranged his dismounted archers and slingers against the Medes, so as to protect the remainder of the passage.

By the time the last of the Assyrians had crossed, and Belib's order of battle was completed, the morning was far advanced. Directly in front of him now appeared only the Median cavalry, the archers and slingers having gradually withdrawn from before them to the right and left.

To the westward the supposed Assyrians under the standard of Prince Sharezer, had struck up an Assyrian March, and began to move towards the field of battle.

Just then the direct rays of the sun shot over the summits of the lofty mountains, and the Medes, cheered by the appearance of their God, gave a great shout. Then appeared Arbaces riding among his troops to encourage them.

"See," said he, "the Supreme looks down upon you with unveiled countenance. The omens have all promised victory; but victory attends only the brave. Even happy omens are reversed, when men grow cowards in battle. Be firm, O Medes, under the eye of your God!"

Again the Medes gave a brave shout, and, at the word of command, the cavalry dashed off towards the West, as though to attack the Assyrians advancing from that quarter. Then was it revealed to Belib and his army that these horsemen had only been used as a screen to a large body of foot, which had been lying down behind them, and which now started up into battle array. The front was composed of some thousands of chosen men, who were equally skilled in the use of the bow, the javelin, and the sword. When they rose up they started the Pæan of the Advance, and all the Medes joined them, singing, as they marched forward:

"To arms! to arms! against Assyria.
Apollo bids to arms, O Medes!"

March on to Victory!

Strike down the invading tyrant,
Media shall be enthralled no more!

The ensign of The Rising Sun
Proclaims freedom to the nations.
The standard of the Lion-slayer
Is snatched from the grasp of the mighty.

Apollo will'd it;
And in the guarded Gate of Media,
In the Pass of her Mountain Wall,
The invader perish'd.
Tens of thousands bit the dust—
All chosen men of Nineveh.
The Caprus was choked with their dead,
And became a river of blood.
Their chariots and horses, their mules and waggons,
Laden with stores and material of war,
And tents, and treasure, and vessels of gold,
Also the standard of Assyria—
Are the rich spoil of the Medes,
With armour and arms for a great host.

The pride of Nineveh is humbled!
The speed of his horse saved her Prince.
Ashamed, he hides in the city,
Who led tens of thousands to destruction;
There is weeping and shame in the great city.

To arms! to arms! for liberty.
Dishonour and death to all tyrants!
Apollo bids to arms, O Medes,
Advance to Victory!"

Thus sang the Medes, as they marched. And as soon as they began, the Assyrians, advancing also at a slow pace, commenced to chant the Pæan which Belib had composed on the evening following the Great Battle of the Euphrates. And thus they prevented the words of the Median chant from reaching them. The voice of Belib, alone, commenced thus:

"Of Sennacherib, the Mighty King,
Son of Sargon the Conqueror,
The beloved of the gods, sing O Assyrians!"

Then the whole army joined in, for every man now knew by heart the song which had so pleased the Great King:

"Hail the Great King, beloved of Asshur!
He looks upon his warriors and they become heroes;
To the foe his gaze is as fatal lightning,
And his mere name as a thunder-bolt.
When he leads the battle
He is as the thunder of the Lord of Heaven!
The nations have risen in rebellion
Like a tempestuous sea:
They have rolled in great waves against the King;
But the King is a firm rock,
And the nations are scatter'd like spray!
His enemies were a great multitude,
Mounted on fleet horses and camels,
Strong in chariots of war,
Clothed in steel and brass:
The Arabians flew against us,
A great host, with the speed of the simoom;

They thought to overwhelm us,
Like the hot blast of the desert.

The King spoke, and his breath scattered them.
The fleet horses turned back without their riders,
And hid themselves in the dust of the flight.

With a few, the King broke the chariots;
Their ruin was a wall before him.

Then the battalions of Babylon trembled
In their armour of steel and brass;
They became weak and trembling cowards.

Hail Sennacherib, the Emperor of the Earth!
Ordain'd by the Gods to rule the nations.

He took captive the Babylonian Prince
Merodach-Baladan, in his glorious chariot,
Drawn by horses of celestial breed,
In his armour of fine bronze, embossed with gold,
And brilliant with precious stones.

The King took him in the midst of his guards.

Hail the Great King, beloved of Asshur!
With his right arm he struck hosts, and scatter'd them,
With his left he swept them into the Euphrates."

While the Pæans were being sung, arrows were being discharged from both armies; and by the time they were finished the javelins began to fly with fatal effect. But, before the engagement became hand to hand, the Medes who had been concealed in the ravine marched out with a shout, both foot and horse, and, deploying, advanced upon the right wing of the Assyrians.

For a moment these movements somewhat disconcerted Belib. It was as though new armies, not reckoned upon, were starting up out of the earth against him. Still he looked for speedy succour from Prince Sharezer, and, until he should come up, the Assyrian general halted his army and rapidly redispersed his forces, to repel superior numbers and well-disciplined warriors, instead of advancing to the attack with too much confidence.

And now, as soon as the Medes had reached the enemy's lines, and the battle became hand to hand, Prince Addin with his formidable mace broke in among the Assyrians, followed by the most valiant of the Hebrews and Medes. In other parts of the field also, the Assyrian phalanx, both in front and on the right, was pierced in many places by heroes of Media; so that it became impossible to maintain that attitude, and soon the combatants mingled in promiscuous battle, wide over the plain.

The leaders of the Median army had so fully calculated upon the discomfiture of the Assyrians, that the body of cavalry, which we have already spoken of, was sent westward to arrest the flight of the fugitives in that direction and they were kept out of action until late in the day. It was when Belib, looking towards the West for the arrival of his auxiliaries, perceived that the followers of the standard of Prince Sharezer passed close to the Median cavalry without the exchange of a javelin, or sign of hostility, that he began to suspect himself the victim of a deep stratagem. He had, early in the morning, sent trusty messengers to communicate with the Assyrian Prince, and disclose his plan of battle, and had been surprised that he had received no response. While he paused to ponder on these things

his fears were confirmed by the vigorous attack of the false auxiliaries upon the Assyrian left. Then was Belib roused, by the new danger, to the vengeful fury of a lion. His courage rose superior to his fears at these accumulated surprises. Shouting to his soldiers the inspiring word, "Sennacherib! Sennacherib!" he speedily led a squadron to the left. Like a hungry lion among a flock of sheep, he scattered his foes before him, and hewed his way with his glittering battle-axe towards the dishonoured standard. At the same time Prince Addin was riding over the field with not less destructive career. The Hebrew wore a coat of steel scale armour, of the most costly Damascus workmanship, impervious to the swift javelin, his shoulders and thighs having the additional protection of strong steel plates. His helmet also was steel, and he wielded a heavy mace of the same metal, carrying at his side a great falchion sheathed. The strong horse which he bestrode was also well armed, and as ardent in the battle as its rider. Seeing where the Assyrian general hastened to support his left wing, Prince Addin followed, not unopposed by many a scornful Assyrian, who, yet, all yielded before the fatal mace.

The Assyrian chieftain was still more conspicuous in the splendid armour which he had won by the capture of Merodach-Baladan, at the great battle of the Euphrates; or, rather, which Sennacherib had given him and commanded him to wear, as a mark of the King's high favour; for, being royal armour, it was otherwise unlawful for a subject to wear it, and it became the King's own spoil. It was said that the song which Belib had written of Sennacherib's triumph, had gained him this royal honour, rather than the capture of Merodach-Baladan, which, unless he had disclaimed all praise for himself, and lavished it upon the King, might rather have produced an ungracious impression in the royal mind, as happened with Saul and David, and a hundred other Kings and their hero-subjects. In this noble armour Belib now fought, and he also rode a powerful war-horse, well sheathed in steel. His weapon was a keen steel axe, whose brilliancy was already dimmed with execution. A troop in himself he rode over the field slaying all whom he encountered.

When Belib approached that division of the Medes who were disguised as Assyrians, he turned to his followers and exhorted them to make a grand effort against the foe in front for the recovery of the disgraced standard, which these rebels had obtained from their Prince by some foul stratagem. "Remember," he cried, "you are the heroes of the Euphrates! The mighty Sennacherib sends you to punish rebellion!"

"Belib! Belib!" was shouted by a thousand brave voices.

"Nay!" replied Belib, loudly, "let your war-cry be 'Sennacherib and Victory!'"

Then the chief led them forward, and the battle raged with great fury around the Assyrian trophy. The combatants being equal in courage and firmness, there was great slaughter on both sides; but, at length, the mighty arm of Belib bore aloft the recovered standard, and the Assyrians hailed their advantage with great uproar. Then another cry arose of "Addin! Addin!" as that Prince crushed his

way through his enemies to dispute again the possession of the prize. Belib, perceiving his purpose, hastened to meet him, lifting the recovered standard high with one hand, vauntingly, and with the other flourishing his terrible battle-axe in sign of defiance. As the two champions approached, the space between them was left clear, and the battle in that part of the field paused; the Assyrians drawing to Belib and the Medes and Hebrews to Addin, each side yielding brief truce, to witness so great a combat. Belib then handed the standard to one of his staff, and rode forward to defend it. Neither combatant carried a shield, but used his weapon to parry, as well as to strike. All around were silent with expectation, as the champions met, eye fixed upon eye, with gleaming fury and keen watchfulness.

Such a combat must be brief, with such weapons in such mighty hands.

For a moment the axe and mace were held on guard. After a feint or two the axe was suddenly uplifted, but its downward flash was arrested by a swing of the mace, and, with a Vulcanian hammer-and-anvil ring, it flew from the grasp of Belib far away over the heads of the bystanders. Instantaneously the mace descended upon the helm of the Assyrian, and with hands stretched towards Heaven, the chief fell back from his horse to the earth, apparently slain.

For a few moments longer the irresistible mace was active upon Assyrian helmets, and the trophy was recovered amid the prolonged plaudits of the Medes. But, while the Hebrew champion was thus occupied, the body of Belib was drawn aside from the spoilers by some of his guards, and the battle recommenced with great fury.

Then Addin perceived Arbaces approaching in his chariot at the head of a strong reinforcement; and, charging his friends to recover for him the rich armour of Belib, he rode off with the standard to place it in safety with the Median general, to whom presenting it, he said:

“Hail, King of Media! Belib is slain, and the day is ours.”

“Thanks, brave champion, King of Israel!” replied the Mede. “Remember that not one of the enemy must escape.”

And all this appeared at that moment scarcely idle vaunting; for the Assyrians were hard pushed and out-numbered all over the field. And those among themselves who knew of the fall of Belib, judged the day to be inevitably lost.

At that moment Arbaces was further encouraged and confirmed in his faith that Heaven had ordained him victory. Not far from him an Assyrian chief was riding at the head of a body of infantry, whom he was leading to where the contest still raged for the spoil of Belib's armour; when Arbaces observed that, without the touch of a weapon or missile, he suddenly threw up his arms, and tumbled from his horse upon the plain.

“Behold!” exclaimed Arbaces, “Apollo is fighting for us, O Medes. That chief has fallen by the God's invisible dart!”

Many others among the Assyrians fell that day from the intense heat of the sun, and were pronounced the victims of Apollo's partial bow. Only one of the Medes was observed to be so struck, and him

the chief of the Magi declared to be of impious life, and the object of Heaven's anger.

The tidings was flying fast over the field that Belib had fallen, carrying despair to the Assyrians, and fresh courage to their enemies. The names of "Addin" and "Arbaces" were shouted with vigour, and were answered, though less vigorously, by the defiant war-cry of "Sennacherib! Sennacherib!" for those of the Assyrians who now entertained no hope of victory, never once thought of retreat, but only how costly to the foe they might sell their lives. Also to encourage one another in brave resistance against great odds, some shouted, "Euphrates! Euphrates!"

Then appeared a miracle on the field, which raised the hopes of the Assyrians, and astonished the Medes.

While the contest yet raged about the spot where Belib had fallen, there arose in another part of the field the cry, so inspiriting to the Assyrians, "Belib! Belib!" And there, indeed, appeared the Assyrian general, as terrible as ever, dealing destruction to those who opposed him. There shone the same helmet, the same armour of fine bronze, embossed with gold, and sparkling with precious stones, and the same crimsoned axe.

Those who had not seen the chief fall, saw now the contradiction to the rumour that he was slain. And those who had seen him struck down, and knew that his body was still the object of fierce contest, said with reverence :

"It is a God fighting for Assyria. It is Asshur!"

Addin beheld the miracle in amazement, and Arbaces said :

"Was Belib slain? Then he is risen from the dead! While the captor of Merodach-Baladan rides over the field, our kingdoms are yet to be won."

Belib lay stunned, though not slain. Yet another Belib appeared upon the field, or some god had taken his semblance and place in the battle.

Whoever might be this phantom warrior, he urged his horse direct towards Addin, turning neither to right nor left, and striking down only those who opposed his way, for he was no enemy to the human race generally.

Nor did the Hebrew Prince stay to consider the mystery, but rode forward to accept this second combat.

As he drew near to his foe, he, alone, saw that it was not the Assyrian, and recognised, beneath the shadowing helm, the terrific countenance and burning eyes of the genie, whom he had beheld last night, and once before, in his sleep, contesting his approach to the vision of the fair daughter of Raguel. All the unspeakable horrors of his dream were renewed at that fatal moment; and a spell of mental agony held him there without power of resistance or flight. From a lion-hearted champion, he suddenly became a terror-stricken victim, awaiting slaughter; and fell beneath the blow of a god burning with jealousy and the chagrin of recent humiliation.

Thus Asmodeus, assuming the semblance of Belib, destroyed the rival though unaccepted lover of the daughter of Raguel.

Then the soul of Addin seemed to leap into the bosom of Arbaces. Alighting from his chariot he mounted a strong led horse, and did the work of two heroes during the remainder of that day. First he sought to avenge the fall of Addin; but Asmodeus heeded not his approach, and, turning, made his way through the field in the direction of the Pass, and in a few moments disappeared, as marvellously as he had come. The body of Addin, however, was carried off by the Medes, before the Assyrians had touched it, to despoil it of its armour; and that armour was afterwards granted to another hero of the Median army, of which more hereafter.

As soon as the disguised genie had been seen riding towards the Hebrew Prince, those Medes who were contending with the Assyrians for the armour of Belib withdrew from the struggle, and crowded round Arbaces for the defence of the recovered trophy, supposing the phantom warrior to be Belib himself escaped, by whatever miracle. And thus the Assyrians who had charge of the prostrate chief found opportunity to tend him with care, and joyfully discovered that he had only swooned.

It was not long before Belib was again riding over the field, cheering his Assyrians with his presence and with his cries of "Sennacherib!" and "Euphrates!"

And the conflict was sustained with great courage and perseverance until darkness and fatigue necessitated a truce. There had been terrible carnage on both sides, but neither was defeated, although both claimed the victory.

Just when the red Orb touched, and seemed to rest upon, the horizon, the trumpets of both nations sounded over all the field, and the warriors gathered wearily to their chiefs.

Arbaces and the Magi, while their god was rapidly disappearing, offered sacrifices in the midst of the people. Then the Magi sang, in the hearing of the Assyrians:

"Rejoice, rejoice, O Media.
The pride of Nineveh is humbled.
The hosts of Assyria are scattered.
The fleet horse and the strong rider are overthrown.
Not one had escaped destruction,
But for the truce of darkness.
Apollo drew his bow against Assyria,
And the ensign of the Rising Sun
Became the ensign of Victory.
Sound the loud flourish!"

The singers paused; and fifty trumpets gave forth the heart-stirring flourish of triumph. Then the singers continued:

"Rejoice, rejoice, O Media,
And be thrall no more.
Rejoice for Victory!
Rejoice for Liberty!
Thou hast triumph'd gloriously
Through the aid of the Supreme.
To thee be all the praise, O Apollo;
Receive the thanks of thy people,
And confirm the Victory!"

Again the fifty trumpets sounded forth a flourish of exultation, and the Medes marched leisurely towards their camp, singing altogether as they went.

Nor were the Assyrians silent. They also sang their pæan, to drown the voices of the Medes. And, as they encamped upon the battle-field, they, too, offered praises to their god Asshur, for having given them a victory over superior numbers.

Thus two rival birds, the gallant lords of neighbouring harems, when they are discovered by their owners in the midst of the spurry contest, and are parted, each, as it retires before its inexorable driver, pauses at intervals to crow its chanticle of victory and mutual challenge to the future combat.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE HORRORS OF THE FIELD AFTER THE BATTLE.—A TRUCE CONCLUDED FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE DEAD AND WOUNDED.—ARBACES APPLIES FOR THE ASSISTANCE OF THE CHALDEANS AND ARMENIANS.—ADRAMMELECH ADVANCES FROM NINEVEH WITH FIFTY THOUSAND OF THE FAMOUS GARRISON TO THE AID OF BELIB.—A MEDIAN COUNCIL OF WAR, AT WHICH DEIOCES SPEAKS.—ARBACES' ADDRESS TO HIS ARMY.—DEIOCES BECOMES THE MEDIAN CHAMPION.—THE THIRD DAY'S BATTLE.—THE AUGURY OF THE SACRIFICES.—THE MEDES RETREAT TOWARDS THE PASS.



WHEN the armies had ceased singing their pæans, there arose from over all the plain other feebler and sadder sounds; sounds unheard before because of the louder uproar and clash of battle. The terrible incessant groan and wail of the thousands of wounded and dying now tormented the ear; the moan of men, lately strong in battle, sobbing out their souls, helpless and faint, their courage all let out with their lost blood; of some shrieking in agony and fear of approaching death; of others, brave still, moaning involuntarily, all unconscious that the dismal sounds they heard proceeded from their own lips. Above all might be distinguished the faint imploring call for water. Such was the mingled expression of horror and agony heard wide and incessant over the battle-field; now the field of the wounded, crying, dying, mingled with the thousands of silent dead.

Before another battle could be fought it would be necessary to clear the ground of these slain and wounded, and that same night a truce was solemnly concluded between the two generals, which should last for the space of eighty-four hours, that each might collect his wounded and dead, and burn the latter.

The wounded were all gathered in during that night, and on the morrow and succeeding day an extensive forest was cleared of its timber, and immense piles were erected for the burning of the dead. Before the evening of the third day a hundred pyres were blazing high, and were burning still during all the next day's battle.

Each nation collected its own dead, with their armour as they had fallen; except that, of the Assyrians who had been slain in the Pass the arms and armour became the spoil of the Medes, who also erected and lighted their funeral pyres.

As soon as the eighty-four hours' truce had been agreed to between the generals, each availed himself of the opportunity to seek reinforcements for the final struggle.

Arbaces, who, at the commencement of the engagement with Belib, had been so confident of the success of his plans that he would have denied a share of the battle to any ally, was, at the end of the day, so impressed with the unyielding valour of the Assyrians, that he concluded at once to seek aid against them rather than risk defeat; especially since in the loss of Prince Addin he seemed to have lost a whole division of his army, so important was the prowess and example of that young warrior. He therefore that same night despatched his swift Persian messenger with letters to the leaders of the Chaldean and Armenian armies, who were said to be not far off, north-east of Nineveh, proposing to them an alliance and the combination of their powers against Assyria. To these Princes Arbaces wrote an account of his successes so far; and requested them to march immediately to his assistance, and share with the Medes the complete conquest of those Assyrians who were yet in the field against him. After which they might proceed as one united power against Nineveh, all encouraged by victory.

Belib, at the same time, had despatched a messenger to Nineveh with particulars of his situation, asking for an efficient reinforcement from the garrison, in accordance with the design of the King when he had commanded the co-operation of Prince Sharezer against the Median invasion. This messenger found his errand anticipated, and met Prince Adrammelech already on his way to the Caprus to avenge the reverse which his brother, Prince Sharezer, had sustained.

On the fourth day, when Arbaces, returning from the morning sacrifice on the mountain-top, entered his pavilion, he found the Persian just returned from his journey, with letters from the Chaldean and Armenian Princes, accepting the alliance. The Persian himself certified that the large army of the allies, whose march he had outstripped, was already proceeding towards the scene of strife. But he had further to report that while the van of the allies could not possibly come to their aid before evening, there was an army of Assyrians within six hours' march, which he computed to number about fifty thousand men, all of the famous garrison of Nineveh, under the standard of Adrammelech—the Lion-slayer worked in gold upon a ground of azure.

The chiefs of the Median tribes were already approaching the pavilion of the general to hold the final council before dispersing to their various commands, and a trumpet signal hastened their attendance.

While Arbaces was yet communicating to them the momentous tidings brought by the Persian, the news of the approach of Prince Adrammelech was confirmed by other scouts who had ridden back into the camp.

Before intimating the course he intended to adopt, with this new danger imminent, Arbaces invited his chiefs to offer briefly their opinions. One advised that the main part of their power should march out of the camp secretly at the rear, where the ground and the woods effectually concealed their movements from the enemy, and advance against Adrammelech before the Assyrian forces united.

That speaker doubted not that Belib would await the arrival of his reinforcements before attacking the camp, and the Medes would thus gain ample leisure to fight Adrammelech alone, after whose defeat they could return and give battle to Belib on the following day. Another was of opinion that the Medes should decline battle that day, and all withdraw to the protection of the Pass, until the Chaldeans and Armenians came up to their aid. Another, a young chief of the Magi, whose name was Déioces, when his opinion was required, said :

“Consider, O General, and fellow chiefs of the tribes, if it will not be wise to draw off our main army immediately, and secretly, as already suggested, but towards our approaching allies, evading the path of Adrammelech by the guidance of our scouts. For it appears to me that we should at present avoid the battle with the fifty thousand—who are all chosen mighty men, using the right hand and the left in battle with equal skill and force—until we can insure their conquest by bringing our utmost power against them. Those we leave in the camp to deceive the enemy, should they be attacked before we return with the main force, could escape to the Pass, and the Pass, guarded as it is, cannot be forced. Our allies are a strong and warlike people, especially the Chaldeans, who would, alone, by their great numbers and bravery, prove a match for the fifty thousand—as so, I trust, should we, without them, but I would have victory doubly sure. When we had united our forces we should return upon the enemy, an overwhelming power, and, with the aid of Apollo, utterly destroy them. As soon as victory was assured, our forces who keep the Pass, no longer needed for its defence, could come forth and aid in the slaughter.”

But all this counsel Arbaces rejected, and said :

“I care not, O friends and chieftains, to leave Belib with his stubborn squadrons between ourselves and the Gate of Media. Nor do I think it would be well to withdraw to the Pass, to the encouragement of the Assyrians and the demoralisation of our own soldiers, without giving battle. If we did so our allies, when they came up, would find the united strength of Adrammelech and Belib arrayed against them, while we should be shut up in the narrow Pass, without the power to deploy to their aid. In one hour the truce will have expired. Let us then, at once, prepare with our whole force to attack what is left of Belib’s proud army, and destroy it ; before Prince Adrammelech can draw a bow in its defence.”

The chiefs all applauded their general’s decision, except Deioces ; and he expressed no dissent, but pondered “How shall we be able to crush in four or five hours the strong battalions of Belib’s Assyrians, when, already, after a whole day’s hard fighting, we left them unconquered, with the battle-field for their encampment ?”

Arbaces then commanded the immediate attendance of all the captains of thousands, and of ten thousands, and when they were assembled before his pavilion he thus addressed them :

“The hour is at hand, O captains, which the gods have appointed to decide between Assyria and Media. They have granted us until

noon of this day, and not longer, to destroy utterly the remains of the proud army of Belib. And thus has the Supreme Apollo decreed : The gods, impartial, shall not aid the battle, and the prize shall be to the most valiant. If, when Apollo looks down upon the battle-field from over the tops of the Median mountains, we have begun to drive the Assyrians towards the Pass or towards the river, then will he confirm our victory, and give us the dominion of the earth. But if, at that hour, the Assyrians still maintain the battle against us, he will spare them for the sake of their valour, and refuse empire to the Medes for the sake of their feebleness.

“Now say thus to your soldiers, through every captain of a hundred to his hundred : ‘Thus says Arbaces—It is decreed to you, O Medes, this day before noon, to win or to lose the cities, the castles, the lands, the cattle, and all the riches of the Assyrians, with their wives and daughters to serve you. The gods have decreed all these benefits to the valorous, to win or to defend ; and to the coward, death or slavery. We shall presently march to battle, to strike for empire. Let the heart and arm of every man among you, O Medes, be strong, speedily to drive the Assyrians, wounded, into the river. This day the eyes of Arbaces, and of the chiefs of the tribes, will be upon every man, to look for heroes whom to reward with heroes’ honours. Remember the great prize of the brief contest !’

“And, further, O captains, let it be proclaimed through all the army, that if any man’s heart fail him, and he dread the close brief battle, the general will forgive him his fears if he will now stand forth and ask to be placed among the guards of the Pass. For, though naturally unfit to look the proud Assyrian face to face in the battle, and therefore a source of contagious weakness and panic during the fight, he may yet serve as well as the most valiant in shooting with the bow and hurling great stones from the heights upon an invading force.”

Arbaces then dismissed the captains of thousands, to repeat his words to all the soldiers, and to prepare for the advance. He then instructed the captains of ten thousands, in his plan of battle ; and dismissed them also to lead the army from the camp and marshal it in the field. To the captain of the camp-men he gave command to remove all the tents, and waggons, and spare horses, and camp-material into the ravine, and to hold all in readiness to march forth again at a moment’s notice.

The general being then left alone with the chiefs of the tribes, he thus addressed them :

“Which of you, O chiefs of the tribes of the Medes, shall be this day the champion of the nation, to seek out Belib in the field, and stay his thirsty battle-axe? Myself would claim this high office of danger and honour, and I should rejoice to emulate to-day the noble deeds of the Prince of the Hebrews in the last battle ; and to repeat my own achievements, when, enraged at the fall of that Prince, I forsook my chariot for the saddle, and mingled in the fray. Fain would I claim personal combat with the captor of Merodach-Baladan ; for from whom else among all the heroes of Assyria may so much

glory be snatched? You know, O chiefs, that for myself I love danger; but for Media's sake I must avoid it this day: for the safety of the army requires that, rather than roam the field as your champion, I watch and order the battle; an office this day more anxious than glorious, with the noble Belib in the field. And, now, which of the chiefs of the tribes will this day be the champion of all Media?"

Each chief eagerly claimed the dangerous honour.

"I thank thee, O Apollo," exclaimed Arbaces, looking reverently towards the morning light, which appeared above the black ridges of the mountains, "I thank thee that Media has at least five champions anxious to meet Belib. Strengthen their hearts, O Supreme, with the assurance of victory!"

Then Deioces, who though a very young man was large of stature and very powerful, said:

"I pray you, General and chieftains, to grant me the first combat with the Assyrian; and if I fall avenge me. I claim this, O chiefs, as my fair opportunity to prove that while I suggested the avoidance of this day's battle, yet for myself I fear not its greatest perils."

The young chief—who was not much unlike Prince Addin, and had a kingly countenance—looked altogether a champion, and his request was granted. Then Arbaces offered him the mail which Addin had worn, and furnished him with a helm similar to that which Asmodeus had cloven; he gave him also the horse which Addin had ridden. To complete his resemblance to the late champion Deioces chose the steel mace for his weapon.

And when he rode forth into the field the Medes were astonished, and raised the cry of "Addin! Addin!" And many were now persuaded that Addin had never been slain; others that he was risen from the dead, or that it was his phantom which was about to aid them in the impending battle.

Meanwhile Belib was vigilantly preparing for the onset of the Medes, as the truce was now nearly expired. His purpose was not to seek battle until the arrival of Prince Adrammelech with his reinforcements; for he had been advised of the approach of that aid, and disposed his army in the form of a great square, so as steadily to withstand the attack of superior numbers. In its centre the archers and slingers could operate freely in whatever direction their services were most needed. Only a few horsemen remained mounted ready to move at the word of command to any point where the formation might be endangered by concentrated attack. The several chiefs of the Assyrians were also mounted, and armed with javelins, watchful to present themselves against any adverse chief who might seek to break through the phalanx. Conspicuous among them all was Belib, moving about with a following of mailed knights, encouraging the soldiers to hold firm, and commanding them on no account to be tempted to advance a step towards the enemy; but to stand, and strike their assailants with coolness and fatal force, until the reinforcement should arrive upon the field, and enable them to utterly destroy the Medes. He promised also that whatever part of the line might be most severely pressed by the foe, his Assyrians might

depend that he would be speedily there, with his mailed knights, to their succour.

Thus were the Assyrians prepared when, shortly after the expiration of the truce, the Median columns commenced their advance, one singer in each company of one hundred men singing the pæan :

“To arms ! to arms ! against Assyria,”

into which was now incorporated an additional stanza, claiming a triumph over the captor of Merodach-Baladan.

The Medes had now reached within bowshot of the Assyrians, and the battle commenced. The voices of the Median captains of hundreds were then heard, again urging the soldiers in the words of the message of Arbaces, to strike swiftly with a firm heart and a strong arm, and push the Assyrians, wounded, into the river. “Let every man,” cried they, “prove himself a hero under the eyes of the general and the chiefs of the tribes !”

Deioces also galloped along the front on his great barbed horse, cheering the men with his noble mien and brave words ; and as they still mistook him for the Hebrew Prince, restored to be again their champion, the cry “Addin ! Addin !” ran along the line.

Obedient to the encouragement of their chiefs and captains, the onset of the Medes was vigorous and unflinching. Many fell by the spears of the Assyrians ; but those behind took their places, and, in many instances, slaying the spearmen engaged with the swordmen beyond. The battle was obstinate, and the slaughter great on both sides, but greater on the part of the Medes, who had rushed upon the spears of the Assyrians.

While the soldiers thus fought hand to hand and shield to shield, the Median chiefs tried to break through the phalanx and engage the Assyrian knights, who, at present, only hurled the javelin over the heads of the soldiers of the line. Deioces, especially, was eager to reach Belib and give him combat. More than once he succeeded in breaking the firm phalanx by the irresistible force of his mace and strong steel-clad horse, and trampled down the Assyrians, but as often was he repelled by the opposing knights, who assailed him in numbers. And the Assyrian general shewed no disposition to engage with him, preferring to remain riding within his lines, encouraging his soldiers, and occasionally hurling the javelin at some prominent and active foe whom he discovered within its flight. For at the morning sacrifice the priest of Asshur, who accompanied the army as its chaplain, had declared the interpretation of the omens to be dangerous to Belib and to Assyria, should he that day engage in single combat ; and he was advised to rule his courage with patience, and exert all his military wisdom in maintaining the defensive, with as much damage as possible to the assailants, until the arrival of the reinforcements from Nineveh.

Whether this interpretation of the augury of the sacrifice was a very simple and prudent invention of the priest of Asshur for the benefit of the Assyrian arms, or whether he honestly read the warning in the entrails of the slaughtered beasts, is left to the judgment of the reader. It is at least remarkable, that while the ancient captains and Kings of

Israel were ever wont to "enquire of the Lord" at their sacrifices, before going to battle, and to act upon the charge of the sacred oracle, so in every other nation and religion, in those days, was it the pious custom to enquire of the gods regarding the issues of battles and other matters of national importance, and to consider the answers as the inspired warnings of foreknowledge. And those oracles of Egypt, Palestine, Babylonia, Media, Persia, Greece, Rome, and even American Mexico and Peru, are gravely recorded by the historians of all those nations, or by tradition, as of true prophetic character. Since those oracles have now ceased to advise in the affairs of mankind, scholars are divided in opinion as to whether the fortune-tellers of all time were cunning liars, or, some of them, honest prophets.

Belib believed in the warning of the priest of Asshur, and, wisely, the future King of Babylon shunned the mace of Deioces, the future King of Media and founder of that glorious dynasty which, in the female line, ultimately included Cyrus the Great.

The charge of Arbaces to his army, that every man should strive to act the hero in that morning's battle, was well obeyed by his brave Medes. Their strong bodies were rendered even preternaturally strong by the dominion of emulous will, and their courage maintained the battle against the best and best-disciplined soldiers of that age with admirable fortitude. But so likewise were the Assyrians as superior to ordinary men in their stern resistance, animated by the cries of "Sennacherib!" "Euphrates!" and "Belib!" and the assurance of their captains that their endurance waited but the approaching aid from Nineveh, to be succeeded by a victorious onslaught upon a retiring foe.

The battle having raged with great mutual slaughter until the rays of the sun began to slope direct upon the field from over the mountain ridges, and the Assyrians still maintaining their ground with firmness, although much reduced in numbers, Arbaces saw with anxious disappointment that the hour was at length come when he must think of an orderly retreat rather than an immediate victory. It was confirmed to him by the tidings of several scouts that within two hours Prince Adrammelech would be upon the field with his army of invincibles, whose right and left hands were equally dexterous in battle. He therefore sent trumpeters over the field to summon, by the appointed signal, the chiefs of the tribes, and the captains of thousands, and ten thousands to assemble around the Median standard, and, when they were come, he said:

"Our conference must be brief, O chieftains and captains, and the action upon it prompt. The hour is come when the Gods have determined that rather than look for victory this day, we must look wisely to avert defeat. To avoid the attack of superior forces which are but two hours distant, approaching under the Prince of Assyria, we must at once commence our retreat in bold, fearless, and prudent order towards the Pass, to await there the arrival of our allies, and the decision of the Gods upon another day's conflict."

Arbaces then directed the order and manner of the retreat, and put into the mouths of the captains of thousands the words which should

be uttered to the soldiers through the captains of hundreds, commending their valour, and making the retreat an act of deliberate choice, and not of pressure from the enemy, that the Medes might repose from the toil of the struggle, and refresh themselves until the arrival of their allies, when they would renew the battle with advantages on a more auspicious day. He also commanded that those who should be the first to retire from the field, and whose hands would be free, should carry with them into the Pass as many of their dead and wounded as could be recovered from the struggle, and those who would be the last to retire should do so in firm slow order, with their faces to the enemy, fighting still as they went. But when the Assyrian general perceived that the Medes had commenced their retreat in so orderly a manner he repeated to all his captains the command that not a step of advance should be made in pursuit, nor the defensive phalanx changed, for he suspected the Mede of a stratagem to draw the Assyrians into the disorder of a pursuit, that they might recover the advantage of their superior numbers in promiscuous battle. Thus the caution of Belib in not following the Medes until the arrival of the Prince of Assyria, was favourable to the plans of Arbaces, which were carried out with complete success. The tents, camp-furniture, stores, draught-horses and oxen, and all the non-combatant followers of the army had, in the early part of the day, been withdrawn into the Pass as a precautionary movement; and now the retreat of the whole army was effected in admirable good order, before the van of the Assyrian reinforcements had appeared upon the field. We shall see hereafter, however, that Belib turned this movement of the Medes to the ultimate advantage of the Assyrians.

Thus the Medes, although failing to accomplish their daring and ambitious aim of investing and taking Nineveh, yet, as combatants, won the respect of their Assyrian foes, and exhibited already those noble qualities which afterwards confirmed their independence, and, later still, won them the empire of the world.

CHAPTER XL.

PANIC IN NINEVEH.—PRINCE ADRAMMELECH JOINS BELIB WITH REINFORCEMENTS.—FLIGHT OF THE ARMENIANS AND DEFEAT OF THE CHALDEANS.—TRUCE BETWEEN BELIB AND ARBACES.



IN a previous chapter we left the Ninevites rejoicing at the great victory of their King over the Babylonian Prince and his allies. A few days later came the tidings of the occupation and pillage of Babylon; and, although that event had been already fully anticipated, the mighty city again made holiday, and there were festivity and music in every street; and everywhere might be heard the now well-known favourite song:

“Of Sennacherib, the Mighty King,
Son of Sargon the Conqueror,
The beloved of the Gods.”

And yet again Nineveh made holiday, and poured forth its inhabitants to the eastern suburb, to witness the departure of Prince Sharezer and his brilliant army of forty thousand warriors of the renowned garrison, including a larger proportion of the Assyrian knighthood than could anywhere else be mustered, except in the army of the King.

Already the city rejoiced in the anticipated triumph over the insurgents of the East. Four days after the departure of the army, criers went through the streets shouting particulars of a great victory, and the total destruction of the Median army. For there were, even in those days, street-criers of false rumours, who, instead of selling their lying prints, received donations from the curious public for their verbal news. A song of triumph was soon composed, with Prince Sharezer for its hero; and for a day it took the place of that of the triumph of Sennacherib. Nobody in Nineveh doubted the truth of the tidings of Victory; for were not the Medes a rude undisciplined people, while the army of Prince Sharezer was of the very best Assyrian chivalry? Yet the news had not been authenticated by any messenger with despatches from the Prince to the palace.

Early on the morrow those who watched from the eastern watch-towers announced to their officers that a party of horsemen was riding towards the city, apparently in urgent haste, judging from the toiling, jaded appearance of their horses, whose breasts and sides were white with foam. Soon after, the travellers were made out to be

Assyrian knights, and it was a matter of surprise why they exhibited no ensign. Then, as they drew still nearer, the chief of the party was recognised by his armour and arms as the royal Prince Sharezer, and a messenger was immediately despatched with the mysterious and foreboding tidings to Prince Adrammelech, who was so far recovered from his wounds as to be able to attend to business of state in his chamber; but was not yet allowed by his physicians to take exercise abroad.

Vain was the endeavour to conceal the truth from the people; vague rumour of disaster got abroad, this time with a basis of truth, and, as regarded the fate of the forty thousand, disastrous beyond exaggeration. Soon all Nineveh was filled with alarm and consternation. All men ceased their usual occupations to listen to, and repeat, the fearful news, that a great army from beyond the eastern mountains had not only entirely destroyed the Assyrian battalions of the hitherto invincible garrison, but was marching against the capital itself, emboldened with victory.

For hours the danger of the capital was discussed with increasing alarm. For who now, it was asked, was there left to meet the war which was rushing against it from the North and the East? The King, the Tartan, and Rabshakeh were far away, with enough rebellion on hand to engage all their victorious power for many months to come; for it was known that all the cities of Mesopotamia and Babylonia were in rebellion. The Prince of Assyria was not yet sufficiently recovered from his terrible wound. Prince Sharezer was already disgraced. Esarhaddon was but a tender boy. The noblest of the knights of Assyria had fallen in the battle of the Pass, or were captives in the hands of the Medes. No living man could remember so dangerous a crisis. Still there were some who declared their belief in the King, and that his destiny was that of a true Assyrian conqueror, who would ultimately prevail against all his enemies. Soon a proclamation, signed by Prince Adrammelech, was sent through the city, calling upon every able-bodied citizen to present himself at the armouries, to arm and drill, a hundred and fifty thousand of whom would be selected to do garrison duty, since the Prince had determined, sick as he was, to lead forth the remainder of the old garrison against the Medes. It was also proclaimed, for the encouragement of the inhabitants of Nineveh, that the disaster which had befallen the army led by Prince Sharezer was entirely due to an ambush in which the soldiers had been slain by tumbled rocks; that no battle had been fought, and the Assyrian arms were as invincible as ever.

It was also proclaimed that a part of the royal army had been despatched by the King, under the command of Belib, to unite with the garrison, and that "By Asshur! the rebels, both of the East and the North, should be utterly destroyed before they had so much as seen the walls of the imperial city."

This proclamation completely dispelled the fears of the Ninevites. The citizens armed with readiness to do the duty of the garrison, in place of those who marched forth with pride through the eastern gates, to the time of never-pausing music. Prince Adrammelech, when he

appeared abroad in his chariot, pale, but still with somewhat of the flash of Sennacherib beaming from his eyes, was greeted with a hundred thousand loud plaudits in anticipation of his triumph over the invader, and in admiration of the triumph of his bold spirit over the weakness of his body.

Again the self-pride of imperial Nineveh was restored, and she waited tidings of great victories gained over her jealous enemies. Again she was singing of "Sennacherib the Mighty King," and anticipating triumphal entries through her gates, with the show which delighted her, of captive Kings and Princes, and the spoils of armies and cities. But again her songs were suddenly hushed, and her confident pride was succeeded by consternation and fear. It was rumoured that there had been a great battle fought between the Medes and the army of Belib, in which the Assyrian general had been slain, and his army entirely destroyed. There was no record in history of two such reverses to the Assyrian arms; and these disasters were now generally believed to signify that a star adverse to Nineveh was in the ascendant, and that the eastern passes were pouring forth a race destined to succeed the Assyrians in the empire of Asia. For although Sennacherib had won a splendid victory, and followed it up by the capture of the great city of Babylon, yet these same instruments of his victories, whom he had sent against the Medes, had in their turn been conquered, and the very champion of Assyria had fallen. Therefore many dreaded that Arbaces would prove to be one of those irresistible heroes raised up by the gods to perform their divine will upon the earth, and give effect to the decrees of Fate, for and against the nations; and that the fortunes of the Mede being superior to those of the Assyrian, Sennacherib himself would be unable to save Nineveh. And those who were at first unwilling to credit the rumour of this second disaster, were compelled to believe it when several fugitives arriving successively from the battle-field, declared that they had seen Belib fall beneath the mace of a Median knight, and that they had only fled from the field when the majority of the Assyrians were already slain, and the residue utterly defeated. Still, there were many in Nineveh who, though waiting in anxious fear, refused to believe the Assyrian cause hopeless, until the enemy had been met by the brave army now marching under the Prince of Assyria.

Prince Sharezer, who since his return to the city had shut himself up in shame from public view, was somewhat comforted when he heard of Belib's defeat. It pleased him better that another leader should fail before the Medes, and another Assyrian army be destroyed, than that any should succeed where he had so signally and shamefully failed. Especially did he feel his own disgrace diminished, when shared by a general so high in the opinion and favour of the King as Belib, and who had led and lost an army of the King's own chosen victors. He trusted, now, that the King and the people would admit that the Mede was an enemy hitherto unappreciated, a repulse at whose hands was less disgraceful than at first appeared.

Twenty-four hours had scarcely passed since the first news of the

defeat of Belib, when it was told in Nineveh that the leaders of the Chaldeans and Armenians had made common cause with the Medes, with whom they were in communication, and that their hosts were marching eastward with great despatch upon the rear of Adrammelech, whose army was, therefore, in danger of utter destruction from an overwhelming attack in front and rear.

The panic of the Ninevites was now complete. Those parts of the city where dwelt the dealers in houses and land were crowded with those who wished to sell, but could find no buyers. General merchandise was at a great discount too. Gold was at a high premium, and precious stones at a still higher; for all were anxious to reduce their wealth to the smallest and most portable compass. The rich men of the city were busy burying treasure in secret places, where they hoped to find it again after the pending revolution had passed over. There were old misers in those days, and many buried their treasure during that panic, where it lies to this day unrecovered, because the owners died without revealing their secret, and the quarters of the city where they had resided were too poor to tempt the use of the divining rod in after times.

These successive rumours of accomplished and impending disasters restored Prince Sharezer to his usual spirits and self-confidence. He no longer felt himself specially disgraced, and would have gone forth to exhort the newly-raised garrison not to yield to fear, but to stand firm in the defence of the walls and gates should the enemy attack the city, and expect early aid from his father Sennacherib. But it was told him in the palace that he was more than ever murmured at by the citizens, as the cause of Nineveh's peril; for it was believed among the people that, had the first army been commanded wisely, the Medes could never have issued through the Pass into the Assyrian territory; and that the brave men which had been led to destruction, for want of ordinary military precaution, would alone have sufficed to keep rebellious Media in check. The friends of the Prince therefore advised that he should not yet show himself to the people, as his presence, instead of confirming their courage against the enemy, might incite revolt and violence against their rulers.

But when the youthful Prince Esarhaddon proposed to go among the people, and address to them words of encouragement, none opposed him, for he was the most popular of the King's sons, and inherited in a greater degree than the others the natural majesty of his father.

So he cased his tender limbs in the harness of a warrior Prince of Assyria, and rode forth among the improvised garrison and the people, with his friend Achiacharus by his side, and proclaimed by the mouths of heralds that Nineveh was perfectly safe, even should the Assyrian arms outside meet with further reverses; for that the walls and gates were impregnable, and the city amply provided for a siege, until such time as the King should return with his victorious legions and punish the insolent mountaineers. The Ninevites cheered their favourite Prince, and many caught the hope and confidence which his words were intended to inspire. Still none counted themselves

rich whose wealth was not reduced to the compact compass of gold and jewels.

During these days of contradictory rumours, excitement, and panic, the Purveyor to the royal household was not without his share of changing emotions. He still clung to the faith that a special Providence shielded his personal affairs, and his anxieties were mitigated. But he no longer looked to have all things according to his desire, since Heaven had permitted him that great and lasting sorrow—the loss of his only son. Nor was his interest in the affairs of the world so great, since his son, as he believed, no longer moved in it. And, so far from dreading the loss of personal wealth, he no longer sought to accumulate it; and, regularly, since his return from Media, had given all his surplus income to the poor and needy. This liberality his wife condemned as excessive folly, and never let pass any opportunity of protesting against it. She would say:

“Let evil times come upon us again, and see then who will remember your gifts, or who then will imitate in our favour your generous folly. It is your duty to save all you can against a day of adversity, especially as the times are so perilous and uncertain.”

“Anna,” he would reply, “we have no son now for whom to hoard up silver; and I feel that it would be sinful to refuse what aid I can afford to our oppressed brethren. I have already a large sum stored up in Rages against a day of adversity.”

Then Anna would weep and increase her reproaches; insisting, in a tone of deepest injury, that she would even now have been a proud and happy mother, with a dear child to save for, had her husband but followed *her* counsel, and permitted her to have *her* way, and kept the lad at home.

“The loss of our son,” he would reply, “is one of the mysteries of God’s Providence. It is in accordance with the will and wisdom of Heaven, although we understand it not. Perhaps the hoarding of the very silver which I have left at Rages was a sin—a distrust of God’s future Providence—a withholding of His gifts from the poor. Perhaps, because I reserved this money for my son’s future portion, and was therefore deaf to the cries of our needy brethren, our son was taken, that I might in future become the true untempted almoner of Heaven.”

This reasoning stayed none of the reproaches of Anna; nor did her reproaches stay the liberality of Tobit. Yet his means were insufficient to answer the calls for his aid, which were daily increasing among his people, and when he had obeyed his conscience to the utmost there yet remained to him more of sadness than satisfaction, on account of the suffering that he could not alleviate. For since the death of King Shalmanezzer the Hebrew captives were much oppressed by their rulers. Many had accumulated wealth by their industry in commerce; which now, under the most frivolous and shallow pretexts, was taken from them. Some were even reduced to slavery, and forced to labour on the public works. The influence of Tobit, Achiacharus, and the young Prince Esarhaddon, was all insufficient to avert the effects of the malice of Adrammelech, and the cupidity of Sharezer.

Besides, it was well known that these people were obnoxious to the King also, and that they might be persecuted without dread of the very rigid interference of justice.

These things furnished Anna with additional arguments against the liberality of her husband ; and she prophesied that the troubles of the Hebrews would yet increase, and a time come when the Purveyor himself, in the loss of office and friends, would need all the means he could accumulate for the day of adversity.

Thus Tobit was little concerned about any personal loss of wealth in the threatened imperial revolution ; but he was anxious for the safety of the young Prince Esarhaddon, whom he loved, and for the future good fortune of his nephew Achiacharus, the Prince's favourite ; and he shared their sympathies. Besides that, he naturally dreaded the general horrors attending the capture of a great and wealthy city by rude barbarians. He therefore rejoiced when, seven days after the departure of Prince Adrammelech, a courier arrived at the palace with tidings that all was well, and Assyria as supreme and glorious as ever.

As usual, Achiacharus was the first bearer of the tidings from the royal apartments to the Purveyor.

"Those," said he, "who reported the death of Belib and the utter defeat of his Assyrians, fled from the field too soon. Belib was struck down, but not slain ; and in the evening his brave army, although much reduced in numbers by the obstinate resistance of the Medes, encamped near the battlefield. The only real disaster that the Assyrians have suffered, after all, was the massacre of Prince Sharezer's army in the Pass."

Then Achiacharus related to his uncle what he had learned of the third battle of the Caprus, and the early retreat of the Medes.

"Thus a second time," he continued, "the Medes retired before a much inferior number of Assyrians, and the supremacy of Assyria is maintained. But it is admitted that these mountaineers of the East have proved the boldest foes that have yet engaged the Assyrian arms, and their retirement from the contest does not appear in either instance to have been compelled by the immediate pressure of the Assyrians ; for they retired from the first field only when night came on, and from the second in deliberate good order, while Belib yet maintained his army stationary in an attitude of defence, awaiting the arrival of Prince Adrammelech. And the loss of the Medes in this battle, although very heavy, was all incurred in their brave and obstinate attacks upon the Assyrian phalanx. It appears that at first Belib supposed the retreat of the Median general, so early in the day, was but a stratagem to draw the Assyrians after him, and break their firm order ; therefore he commanded that not a man should pursue. But it is now conjectured that Arbaces had tidings of the approach of Prince Adrammelech, and himself expecting his northern allies upon the field within a few hours, but not until after the Assyrian reinforcements would have come up, he deemed it time to imitate the plan of Belib, and adopt the defensive while he had yet the opportunity, until the arrival of the Chaldean and Armenian hosts. When, however, Belib saw that the retreat was not feigned, and that the

greater portion of the Median army had actually entered the Pass, leaving before its mouth only a defensive semi-circle, he espied an advantage to himself, and quickly advanced his Assyrians. He then assailed the small Median front with a thickly concentrated tempest of arrows, javelins, and stones. The courage of the Medes now availed them nothing; the attack was irresistible; and the exposed front of the enemy began to fall with great slaughter. Too late Arbaces perceived his error and its consequences. It was now impossible to bring forth his battalions again and deploy. His front must be entirely sacrificed to the converging attack, or withdrawn into the mountain gorge; where, although he already occupied positions at its mouth which it would be impossible either to force or to pass, yet he would be shut in, and effectually cut off from his approaching allies. Deioces, and other Median knights, had plunged forth, over heaps of slain, among the Assyrians, the Median champion hoping for an encounter hand to hand with Belib, but they were forced to retreat before overwhelming numbers, and narrowly escaped death or capture. Having forced the Medes entirely from the plain the Assyrian general so placed his army that it will be impossible for the foe again to issue forth and deploy.

“Soon after this the army of Adrammelech marched upon the field, to the great joy of the weary soldiers of Belib. But the royal Prince himself was no longer able to command them. The exertion of the journey from Nineveh had been too much for his weak condition, and his wound had broken out afresh, so that all that day being unable to bear the jolting of his chariot, he had been borne along gently upon a litter in a very pitiable condition; and now, of necessity, yielded the entire command of the army to Belib.”

Thus the honour of the further operations against the invaders of Assyria fell entirely to Belib, and the favour of the King was confirmed to him; while Sennacherib never forgave his sons, Adrammelech and Sharezer, the latter for his shameful misleading and the consequent destruction of a noble army, and the other for his disgracefully-gotten wound; which, but for the timely presence and good generalship of Belib, would probably have caused the loss of the remainder of Nineveh's famous garrison, and left its gates exposed to the clamouring siege of the invaders.

“The original army of Belib,” continued Achiacharus, “having been disposed so as to hem in effectually the Medes in the position to which they had retreated, the Assyrian general directed his attention to the reception of the Chaldeans and Armenians, whom he knew to be near at hand, and disposed the army of Adrammelech so as to render impossible any communication between them and the Medes. But when the armies of the northern allies drew near, towards evening, neither they nor the Medes, nor their foes the Assyrians, were in a condition at once to assume the offensive; all being fatigued to their utmost endurance, either by battle or travel, and the final struggle was necessarily put off until the morrow.

“At present our information respecting the subsequent battle is very limited. It is said that from the first the Armenian general,

when he found that their Median allies were not upon the field, and judged from the noisy rejoicings of the Assyrians that Arbaces had been defeated, was desirous of avoiding an engagement, and retiring during the night; but the Chaldean shewed so much determination to stay and fight, and his soldiers so much courage and confidence of victory, that their faint-hearted allies were induced to abide the battle. The Armenians, however, proved only a danger and weakness in the conflict, for they gave way early before the Assyrian charge and fled; whereby the Chaldeans, who stood their ground, were outflanked. Even then, although Victory was no longer possible to the Chaldeans, they fought shield to shield with great bravery, determined to make the Assyrian success as costly as possible; affording evidence, as already the Medes had done, that there are those among the King's enemies who are able to put to close test the superiority of the Assyrians. After an obstinate battle, and great slaughter, and when the Chaldeans who survived had seen their general fall by the hand of Belib, they fled and followed the Armenians towards the mountains.

"Since then Belib has concluded a solemn truce with Arbaces, leaving him, of necessity, in possession of Media and all its western Passes; while Belib returns with his portion of the southern army to rejoin the King, and the Garrison, elate with victory, returns to the city. Command will immediately be issued to give the sick Prince of Assyria and his victorious army a triumphal entry; and Nineveh has indeed occasion to rejoice that the formidable Mede is driven back, and solemnly bound, for the present, not to emerge from his mountains into Assyria, while the rebels of the North are utterly defeated and scattered."

But it should be mentioned that when the Chaldean nation afterwards learned that Arbaces had retired before the Assyrians, before he had been beaten, and allowed himself to be shut up in the Pass inactive, while his allies, invited by himself to the spot, were fighting a desperate and lost battle, they attributed his conduct to treason, and conceived a hatred to the Medes which lasted even to the days of Cyrus.

CHAPTER XLI.

SENNACHERIB'S RAPID CONQUESTS.—ISAIAH'S ALLUSIONS THERETO.—
TOBIAS IS EXAMINED AND LIBERATED BY KING HEZEKIAH.—THE
WICKEDNESS OF THE JEWS AND THEIR PRIESTHOOD.—ISAIAH'S
DENUNCIATION OF SHEBNA.



LED on by the adventures of Prince Addin, and his brief part in this great insurrection, we have, perhaps, already devoted too much space to its details. We shall, therefore, now endeavour to pursue more narrowly our special subject, which is rather a history of certain Hebrew captives of Nineveh and Ecbatana, than of their masters, or of the rapid marches and conquests of the great King Sennacherib. Yet the retrospect of any of the events of those days is illumined with the glare of so bright a comet in the historic sky, that attention is naturally averted from minor themes to gaze at the marvel. For, indeed, such controllers of mankind as Sennacherib of Assyria, who made the world to tremble, and that modern Sennacherib who by means of the legions of France conquered many nations, bent them to his will and led them whither he chose to face battle and death, are as comets in the sky of history, whose trains of light extend from the nuclei of their own days, across the length of succeeding ages. We say this in mere admiration of the power of their mighty wills, combined with their extraordinary fortunes as rulers, and not in laudation of their acts. And even the angels, surveying this globe, may pause in their high heavenly occupations, and regard with interest that unit of humanity which is permitted to control and lead so many millions of its fellow men, and influence the affairs of the whole planet by its single will. Not merely the angels, but the Most High Himself looked down upon this conqueror with special observance, and said through His prophet Isaiah :

“I will punish the pride of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and will dim the glory of his high looks.”

But this was said later on, for the assurance of the King of Judah, while Sennacherib was threatening Jerusalem.

Although we shall for a time avoid the details of the exploits of this extraordinary Prince, we shall briefly follow his course until he pause in the land of Judah, the next scene of our proper history.

Having taken Babylon, as already mentioned, and secured therefrom a great treasure of gold, and silver, and precious stones, the King of Assyria submitted the city for a few days to the pillage of his soldiers, as he had promised. Ultimately he made Belib its tributary King, in reward for his signal services and fidelity. Sennacherib then turned back, and, marching his army principally along the Euphrates, took with amazing rapidity, and without a single check, all those cities and castles which had revolted in favour of Merodach-Baladan. Their Kings and Princes he slew, and replaced them from the noblest and most trusty of his knights; while from the general inhabitants he exacted such heavy fines that never before had so enormous and continuous a flow of wealth poured into Nineveh. Besides this, he took horses, oxen, sheep, and camels innumerable. It was recorded in the Assyrian archives that in this memorable expedition the King and his generals took no less than seventy-nine cities, and eight hundred and twenty villages and castles. At the same time his army rapidly increased, and every conquest rendered it more invincible; for each new King speedily raised a contingent from among the conquered, and loyally followed the Imperial leader to mightier enterprises.

Sennacherib's next expedition was against the insurgents of the northern mountains, whose invading armies Belib had already defeated and driven back. To chastise their incursion the King marched into their country, took their cities, slew their Kings, and led into captivity the fiercest of the Chaldean tribes, planting them in Babylon and other cities thereabout, as his father had before expatriated and re-settled the ten tribes of Israel.

Having chastised all his enemies nearer home, except the Medes, whose country was very difficult to invade, and very poor, and from whom the King accepted the offer of tribute as a present atonement for their revolt, he organized the long-desired expedition into Syria. Secretly he purposed to avenge himself upon the Medes, when more at leisure, for the disaster of the Caprus Pass, and the stout resistance offered to his lieutenant in the succeeding battles.

By this time the mere name of the King of Assyria was a terror to all the nations of Asia that were not his allies; and even distant Egypt and Ethiopia started to arms with mingled jealousy and alarm at the rumour of such rapid and important conquests, and prepared for immediate war when the Assyrian turned his face towards Africa, by invading Syria.

In this third campaign Sennacherib again subdued all before him. City after city yielded to his mighty siege engines, the irresistible assaults of his soldiers, and his masterly tactics. Crossing the Lebanon, he took immense spoil from the maritime towns of the wealthy Phœnicians, and even captured the imperial cities of Tyre and Sidon, with all their dependencies. This latter was a conquest of great importance. Thirteen years previously, while the same King Eluleus ruled the rich kingdom of Tyre, Shalmanezzer had laid siege to the capital without success, although Sidon and some other important towns had revolted from Eluleus, and furnished the Assyrian with a numerous fleet for the blockade and attack by sea. Then the

Tyrians gained a complete naval victory over the Assyrian allies, taking many prisoners, and destroying or capturing their ships, and ultimately compelled Shalmanezzer to abandon the siege altogether. Now the same King Eluleus had lost all but the capital, when Tartan, who had been sent southward to take Ashdod, returned, successful, and rejoined his forces to the main army of the Assyrians. He brought also a most important reinforcement of warships, contributed by those cities along the coast which had submitted to him, or been taken by him, between Ashdod and Tyre. These ships being handled by Phœnician sailors and manned with Assyrian soldiers subdued the Tyrian fleet, so that the capital became completely invested by sea and by land. At length Eluleus found means to escape to the island of Crete, when Tyre no longer held out.

This event was thus immortalized in the writings of the prophet Isaiah, and ascribed to the especial purpose of the Supreme, who employed the Assyrian as his instrument :

“Howl, ye inhabitants of the isle !

Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days ?

Her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn.

“Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city,
Whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of
the earth ?

The Lord of hosts hath purposed it,

To stain the pride of all glory,

To bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth.

Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish : there is no
more strength.

He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms :

The Lord hath given a commandment against the merchant city,

To destroy the strongholds thereof.”

A great host of the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, and of the other conquered cities, the King sent captive into the land of Assyria, and thus, their “own feet” carried them “afar off to sojourn,” and they formed a helpless moving stream passing through the land “as a river,” with “no more strength” to turn aside from the course bidden by the conqueror, than a river to turn from its channel.

After this the King marched his forces against the fenced cities of Judah, and it was at about this time that Tobias, so long buried in the state dungeon at Jerusalem, awaiting trial as a spy and an infidel, was brought forth and examined before King Hezekiah himself.

The King of Judah had lately become less zealous in enforcing the strict penalties of the law of Moses, for the prophets had raised their voices against the too frequent shedding of blood ; and, in consequence, the influence of the informers, and the cruel persecutions of the priests, had somewhat abated. Apart from that circumstance in favour of the accused, the King soon became convinced of the perfect innocence of Tobias on both the charges brought against him. The chastening of this long imprisonment had impressed the beautiful but now pallid countenance of the youth with a touching expression of sorrow, and physical weakness ; yet the sorrow appeared to be

curiously subdued by a happy resignation and hope, and his face seemed to shine with loving-kindness. While Tobias could scarcely look up for the light, which was dazzling after the long accustomed dimness of his prison, the King examined his downcast countenance with pity, admiration and favour; and as the King's questions were uttered in tones of increasing tenderness and kindness, Tobias felt that there was no longer any danger of an unjust sentence, either against himself, or his Benjamite friends, should he own them; and he requested that Abner the son of Jonathan might be fetched to the Judgment Hall to account for his presence in Jerusalem, and bear witness in his favour. When Abner came he was amazed to behold the son of his dear friend still living, but looking indeed like one who had just risen from the grave. This Benjamite was admitted by all to be a very loyal and religious man, and the charges against Tobias were entirely destroyed when Abner witnessed that he had entered Jerusalem solely for the fulfilment of the duties of a good Israelite. He moreover produced the letter, which Tobias had brought from his father in Nineveh to Abner in Jerusalem, wherein the statements of Tobias were confirmed, Tobit writing there of his advancement, with King Shalmanezzer's special permission that he might continue the observance of the peculiar rites and habits of his own religion. Therein also he blessed the good King Hezekiah, and rejoiced at the re-establishment of the Law in his dominions, expressing an ardent hope that Israel might yet be re-united to Judah, and the whole kingdom ruled by the House of David.

In setting the young Naphtalian at liberty, the King publicly commended his strong piety and patience, as evinced in his replies to the King; and commanded Shebna, his secretary, to hand Tobias a considerable present of silver from the royal treasury in compensation for the great wrong he had sustained.

For many days Tobias remained at the house of Abner the Benjamite in a very weak state, and unable to bear, without pain, the full light of day. Had it even been otherwise he could not prudently have left Jerusalem to return to his father in Nineveh, because of the extreme danger of travelling, with the war raging in the land and the country lawless. Nor was it even possible to send a letter to his sorrowing parents, to correct the report of his death, which he now learned had been sent by Abner to Tobit. Again he could but exercise prayerful patience, until the day should arrive when he might hasten on his way homeward, to turn the mourning of his parents and friends into rejoicing on his account; and then obtain his father's permission, at length, to seek his beloved cousin in the land of Media.

And now, the King of Assyria having invaded Judea, the cities of the holy land, all strongly fortified, and well provisioned as they had been by Hezekiah, fell into the hands of the Assyrians with the same ease and rapidity as had previously fallen the cities of the heathen. Scarcely a day passed but messengers arrived at Jerusalem with tidings of nothing but disaster and loss.

So overwhelming were the invading armies that the King of Judah

made no attempt to check them in battle. For although Hezekiah had been successful against all his other enemies in the field, and had won a great and respected name, second only to that of his great ancestor David, he trembled at the approach of his powerful enemy. To the people of Jerusalem, who everywhere began to shew signs of alarm, he issued an encouraging proclamation, bidding them have confidence in God, in their strong defences, and in their powerful allies the Egyptians, who, he trusted, were already advancing to their aid. Especially he bade them trust in God, saying:

“Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the King of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles.”

Yet, at present, appearances and experiences were altogether and accumulatively against this confidence. The cities which stood the siege were soon captured and their inhabitants put to the sword. Those which, hopeless of successful resistance, opened their gates to the invader, were given to favourite generals or allies, and their inhabitants driven out to continue the stream of captives into Assyria, the intention of the King being to replace them with people of a different race, who would owe no love or allegiance to a Jewish monarchy. The inhabitants of some other cities, warned by these events, fled, with all they could carry, towards Egypt; and left their deserted and silent habitations to the enemy. When Sennacherib had approached within a few miles of the capital, Isaiah the prophet thus alluded to his rapid progress yet nearer:

“He is come to Aiath,
He is passed to Migron in Gibeah;
At Michmash he hath laid up his carriages:
They [his armies] are gone over the Passage [of Michmash]:
They have taken up their lodging at Geba;
Ramah is afraid;
Gibeah of Saul is fled.
Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim!
Cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth!
Madmenah is removed;
The inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee.
As yet shall he remain at Nob that day:
He shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion,
The hill of Jerusalem.”

The inhabitants of Gibeah and Gebim waited not the siege, but fled towards Egypt. Those of Gallim and “poor Anathoth” were put to the sword. Madmenah, because she opened her gates to the invader, was merely “removed” into captivity. Sennacherib had “laid up his carriages” at Michmash, because he contemplated a detention of some months at least, if not years, before the immensely strong fortifications of Jerusalem, in the siege of which the bulk of his chariots would be useless.

And now, while the Assyrian King yet held his head-quarters, or remained, “at Nob that day,” Hezekiah repented of his revolt from

Assyria, and confessed his despair of saving even his capital, by sending ambassadors to Sennacherib, saying :

“I have offended ; return from me : that which thou puttest on me I will bear.”

The anger and vengeful purpose of Sennacherib against the monarch of Judah had been too long cherished to be easily appeased by submission at the last moment, while the strong cities of the kingdom were rapidly falling into his hands ; and it seemed improbable that Jerusalem could escape the fate of Tyre and Sidon. Yet the King of Assyria disdained not to take advantage of this submission in a crafty manner. Judging that Hezekiah was looking towards Egypt for assistance, Sennacherib professed to listen to his prayer, and led him to believe that the invading armies should be withdrawn on payment of a specified sum in gold and silver, the amount being such as he deemed would drain the treasury of the Jewish King, and leave him nothing wherewith to pay for Egyptian aid. Eager to be freed from so terrible a foe, Hezekiah made no hesitation in promising to pay the sum. But until the money was collected and handed to him the Assyrian King declined to stay the war, even for one day, but would pass by Jerusalem for the present, and commence the siege of the strong city of Lachish. Thither the Jewish ambassadors followed him with the gold and silver, a sum so large that not only the royal treasury was emptied, but also the treasury of the Temple, and, to complete the sum, the King was driven to cut off the golden ornaments from the doors and pillars of the temple itself. All this did Hezekiah send to Sennacherib, to his camp before Lachish, yet the Assyrian continued the siege of that city, and made some excuse for failing to carry out immediately his own part of the treaty.

Then there appeared no hope for the salvation of the kingdom of Hezekiah. For while the King of Assyria remained personally before Lachish, he sent his generals to take other cities of less defence, and the devastation of the land was unabated. The arm of flesh uniformly prevailed, and the God of Israel appeared to have left His people in the hands of their faithless enemies. And so He had, as He had already threatened by the mouths of His prophets. For although His servant Hezekiah was a good and religious King, and had already reigned fourteen years, doing “that which was right in the sight of the Lord,” it is not to be supposed that because he reigned righteously the whole nation had become converted by a miracle from evil practices to good. The statues of the gods had been thrown down ; the grove temples abolished ; the worship of the Sun and the host of heaven prohibited ; with the cruel burning of infants as sacrifices to Vulcan in the valley of the son of Hinnom ; but the private lives of the great bulk of the people were yet corrupt. They adopted whatever forms of religion were commanded by the reigning King, as a set of forms without essentials, and as a necessary conformity to the fashion.

Much of this general irreligiousness was brought about by a set of men very numerous in those days, who were conspicuous professors of religion, and, in their way, even expounded the law to the simple ;

but who, privately, were unjust, covetous and arrogant. Such men have been found in all nations, in all communities creeds and ages. They form a class of humanity assuming to themselves whatever character among their fellows is esteemed the most sacred, most pure, and most influential morally; for the credit's sake, and as an easy and sure road to profit, and to control over the intellects and consciences of their fellow men and women. They thrive best among the more numerous and ignorant class, because generally their natural powers place them too low, intellectually, for distinction and influence higher up in society. Of such a man let women, especially, beware, when his voice is soft, his manner gentle, and he sighs his acquiescence in the most simple matters. His brow maintains forced solemnity and serenity, but around his mouth the sceptic may possibly trace lurking cunning. The gaze from beneath his serene brow, however, covers with an instinctive blush the countenance of the fair "sister" on whom it is snaringly fixed. His friendly grasp of the hand is soft, but tenaciously prolonged. He preaches against the accumulation of wealth, but is always deferent to the wealthy and retentive of whatever riches he can obtain. He loves fees and gifts. Let men and women beware of such a wearer of the Cloak of Religion, and distinguish between him and the true, and even unprofessing, practiser of religion itself.

Then, again, much secret contempt was caused by the pride and covetousness of the priests and Levites who were the administrators of the religious rites, and officers of the Temple. Instead of truly serving God as was their office, and maintaining holy exemplary lives, they were epicures, and vain, valuing more their share of the sacrifices, and the pomp of their gorgeous robes and insignia, and proud conspicuousness, than the modest Beauty of Holiness.

Such men—who form a special class in the moral department of the genus, always, and everywhere—helped to make religion unpopular with a great portion of the people, who, illogically, blamed religion for the false assumption of its character by hypocrites. There was also much corruption still practised secretly in high places, without the knowledge of the King, by those who professed a religious observance of the Law. The prophet Micah, who lived and wrote at this time, thus spoke of them:

"Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? None evil can come upon us." The building up of Zion with blood alluded to the frequent executions of those who broke the law of Moses, while there was so much greater secret sin that went unpunished.

Isaiah also, the Prince of all prophets, had preached and prophesied already, for nearly fifty years, to the people of Judah and Jerusalem; but without much influence, although his life and his doctrines were equally pure. He had pointed out to them boldly the corruptness

and hypocrisy of their lives, in substituting sacrifices and rites for religion itself, with its necessary loving-kindness and purity of life. But this holy man, as well as Micah and Hosea, was out of favour with the priests, and preached to a careless people. The priests and Levites, as already stated, loved the fat profits which accrued to them from the numerous sacrifices and oblations which it was the fashion to bring to the Temple as atonements; and it was their habit to lay greater stress on the importance of obeying the Mosaic law of sacrifices and oblations, than of leading pure and fineless lives; while the prophet urged that purity of heart and conduct was essential, and the sacrifices and oblations, and ritualistic observances, non-essential.

Whenever the venerable prophet had preached in the temple, its courts were crowded with hearers, for it had become fashionable to listen to his grand poetic sentences, although his teachings were not acted upon. And then were uttered warnings, denunciations, and pleadings, which, though they were only languidly heard as excellent sermons, and soon altogether forgotten by the hearers, remain to this day the most immortal of human utterances. While artistically, and scientifically, the human race has, since that age, made steady and marvellous progress—so much so that could the contemporaries of Isaiah be raised from the dead to witness the works and the habits of our age, this would appear to them emphatically the age of enchantment and magic—yet those words, uttered in the courts of the temple to those “careless ones,” remain the grandest and most impressive poetry of all that has succeeded it, and may be counted immortally so. For notwithstanding the ravages of many fierce revolutions, changes of dominion, tribulations, and scattering of nations, which have overwhelmed and buried in oblivion the records of great and long-enduring empires, the sayings of this prophet, with the accompanying sacred writings, have marvellously escaped, and through supervening ages of darkness and ignorance been spared to us.

And at that time, which in his prophetic visions appears to have been foreshadowed to him, when a great and general geological disturbance shall take place, and continents and oceans be re-arranged, when :

“The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up and he shall be brought low. . . . and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. . . . And when he shall utterly abolish the idols [or sculptures]. And they [men] shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, *when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth*”—even then, amid general wreck, those scriptures, now so multiplied over all the earth, in every tongue, may escape. When all works of art—all pleasant pictures and sculptures, and ships—all the fruits of man’s loftiest genius—shall be destroyed; when the architects’ proud works, the high tower and the fenced wall, shall be shaken down; even then, when the little isles of the sea shall become the tops of hills that are

lifted up, with new continents at their bases, copies of the Sacred Book may surely be found there: and when the high mountains shall be brought low, so that the summits of the Alps and the Andes shall become the little isles of the sea—there also may be found copies of the sacred volume. And the few affrighted ones that are spared, when He hath ceased “to shake terribly the earth,” when they come out of their hiding places in “the holes of the rocks, and the caves of the earth,” to possess the renewed world, as once before the few spared from the Asiatic Deluge are said to have descended from Mount Ararat, they may yet snatch from the general ruin this book, which has become the Holy Book of the gentiles, and bear witness to the fulfilment of the sublime prophecies of this venerable, but in his own day neglected, preacher; even when the cathedrals and palaces of to-day shall have become mere mounds, as are already the once proud structures of Nineveh and Babylon, but atmosphered, as they will then be, by the deep ocean.

And not only were the warnings of the prophet practically unheeded by the people of Judah and Jerusalem, and their priests and princes, but even the King, influenced by the latter, and especially by his secretary and treasurer Shebna, who was his favourite and most influential adviser, had up to this time failed to adopt that implicit reliance upon the God of Israel, which was especially required of the “chosen people,” and which the prophet had so vigorously urged as the only means of salvation to the country. Hezekiah, wisely in a mere diplomatic sense, had looked for support, in his revolt against the suzerainty of Assyria, in foreign alliances. But as these alliances had always led, more or less, to the adoption of the degraded and forbidden customs of the heathen, they had been sternly prohibited by the prophets; and deliverance, even by miracle, after the manner of the destruction of the Midianites in the time of Gideon; and of the Syrians under Ben-hadad before Samaria, and again at Aphek—was promised to a faithful, obedient, and trustful people. For a brief while Hezekiah rejoiced in the success of Merodach-Baladan, when he heard that he had regained Babylon, the city of the most abominably immoral practices; and while he was yet counting upon strength from this unholy alliance, Babylon had been again re-taken by the Assyrian King, and Merodach-Baladan was again an escaped fugitive. When the King of Judah heard of this, he put his trust more completely in Egypt, then ruled by Tirhakah, the third and last of the mighty Meroe dynasty, to whom he sent ambassadors, with costly presents; and this was an alliance which had ever been forbidden to Israel, and which had long ago proved a great evil, even to Solomon the Wise. Therefore had Isaiah vigorously denounced it, and when the people of Judah and Benjamin fled from their cities at the approach of Sennacherib, and went into Egypt with what they could carry, hoping for refuge there until the war was over, he described their journey as:

“Into the land of trouble and anguish,
From whence come the young and old lion, the viper and flying fiery
serpent.

They will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses,
And their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people that shall
not profit them.

For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose :

Therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still."

[And trust only and entirely in God.]

Had Shebna been the adviser of the King of any other people than the Jews, who were commanded by sure authority to place their trust only in the God of Israel for deliverance from heathen enemies, he would have been properly accounted a great and wise statesman ; not only in making an alliance with the powerful Emperor of the West, to aid Judah against the Emperor of the East, but in rendering almost impregnable the defences of the capital. It was by his advice and contrivance that a second outer wall was built around Jerusalem, which enclosed within, for the use of the inhabitants during a siege, the waters of Gihon. He, too, devised some additional fortresses for the defence of the walls, so that some of the houses had to be removed. But because these defences were trusted to more than the power of God to defend them, the prophet denounced them as insufficient, saying :

"Ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool.

And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem,

And the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall.

Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old
pool :

But ye have not looked unto the Creator thereof, [of the Mount of
Jerusalem],

Neither had respect unto Him that fashioned it long ago."

Thus did Isaiah object to the counsels of Shebna which the King followed, and declared that the country would not be saved by them ; while Shebna denounced the prophet as a visionary in all matters of state.

So completely had the treasurer gained the confidence of Hezekiah that if the King ruled Judah, Shebna ruled the King. None dared to compete with him as the first Prince of Israel. Being of large intellect, handsome countenance, noble person, and enormous wealth, he felt, and impressed others with, his superiority ; and became ultimately the victim of that foolish pride, and fatal self-reliance, which precede a fall. Being very observant of the Mosaic ritual, and liberal in his sacrifices, he passed for a religious man, and was honoured and extolled by the powerful priesthood. As to the general people, it was difficult to discover who shared most of their homage and respect—the King or his favourite. On state occasions Shebna wore a coronet of gold, superior to that of any Prince of Israel except the splendid crown of Solomon, worn by Hezekiah. And when abroad he used chariots and horses little inferior in splendour to those of royalty, with a following of guards and servants nearly as numerous. So many honours had the King, in course of time, accumulated upon his favourite, that in privileges of outward magnificence, as well as real power, the treasurer seemed, indeed, to share

the royalty of Judah. In his consequent pride, and security of position, Shebna made no secret of his scorn for his opponent Isaiah. The prophet, no less proud in another sense, contemned all the rank, pomp, and power of Shebna. This was signally shewn, to the mortification of the latter, when, on one occasion, the treasurer had ascended a rock near the sepulchres of the kings, to note the progress of an excavation which was being made there for his own vault. Below were his chariots, and the chariots of some of his friends and attendants, and a guard of horsemen; and around him were grouped some of the Princes of Judah, who had ascended the rock with him. Suddenly Isaiah appeared among them, his countenance indicating that he was under the influence of the divine afflatus, and said:

“What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here?
 That thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here,
 As he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high,
 And that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock?
 Behold, the Lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity,
 And will surely cover thee.
 He will surely violently turn and toss thee,
 Like a ball, into a large country:
 There shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the
 shame of thy lord's house.
 And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state will I pull
 thee down.
 And I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah:
 And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy
 girdle,
 And I will commit thy government into his hand:
 And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the
 house of Judah.
 And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder;
 So he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none
 shall open.
 And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place;
 And he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house
 And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house,
 The offspring and the issue,
 All vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups,
 Even to all the vessels of flagons.
 In that day, saith the Lord of hosts,
 Shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed,
 And be cut down and fall;
 And the burden that was upon it shall be cut off:
 For the Lord hath spoken it.”

These humiliating threats, uttered in the presence of his friends and servants, Shebna was compelled to hear without retaliation. For even those who professed to regard the utterances of Isaiah as the mere ravings of a madman, felt a respect and kind of veneration for that madness; and it would have been accounted sacrilege, even for a King, to lift his hand against a rebuking prophet. But for this

feeling and custom, the proud and powerful treasurer would have dashed Isaiah from the rock for the bold affront. Merely feigning a smile of contempt, and saying: "His ravings grow more insolent!" he descended to his chariot and drove away in doomed pomp.

We have now for the present said enough of Shebna, his influence with the King, and the corruptness of the Jews generally at this time. And this much we thought it necessary to say, in explanation of the terrible disasters which were permitted to the kingdom of Judah, at a time when, most prominent in its history, reigned the best of its Kings, and preached the greatest of its prophets.

CHAPTER XLII.

SENNACHERIB RENOUNCES THE TREATY WITH HEZEKIAH, AND DESPATCHES HIS GENERALS TO INVEST JERUSALEM.—RABSHAKEH'S SPEECH TO THE JEWS ON THE WALL.—ISAIAH ADDRESSES THE KING AND THE PEOPLE IN THE EAST STREET.—THE PEOPLE REPENT AND HUMBLE THEMSELVES.



EZEKIAH was not long in discovering that he had emptied his treasury, incurred an enormous debt to the priests, and disfigured the temple, to no other purpose than the enrichment and amusement of his Assyrian enemies. For Sennacherib sent a letter to him from before Lachish, saying that having learned that the King of Judah was in correspondence with Tirhakah, and seeking an alliance with that Prince, a circumstance which Hezekiah had concealed when praying for peace with Assyria, therefore the treaty was null, as though it had never been made. And, further, that the King of Assyria would require all the southern cities of Judah, as well as Jerusalem, as bases for his operations against Tirhakah, with whom it was his intention to fight for the empire of the whole world, before making his triumphal return to Nineveh.

Then Sennacherib, while he continued personally to conduct the siege of Lachish, which must soon yield, sent against Jerusalem three of his generals, Tartan, Rabshakeh, and Rabsaris, with a great host, that its investment might be commenced without delay. Also he ordered all his chariots down from Michmash, and laid them up at Ashdod, which Tartan had previously taken while his master Sennacherib was warring north of Jerusalem. There he kept them in readiness for the invasion of Egypt, when he should have completed the conquest of Judea.

Meanwhile, Tobias recovered from the effects of his long imprisonment, and was now able to go about the streets of the Holy City, with ample leisure to admire its beauties, and to indulge in the pleasing impressions of its grand and sacred associations; even from its patriarchal rule by King Melchisedek in the dim vista of long past ages, down to its imperial glory under David and Solomon. Its walls, gates, and forts were now all strongly repaired; and, as we mentioned before, a new outer wall had been built, enclosing the river Gihon as a ditch; also many additional forts had been erected. And for the manning of all these defences the population of the city was abundant. It was even crowded with an additional population of mighty and wealthy men, who had removed there with their families from less

secure places round about. And every male within it was well armed and well trained to either garrison or field duty. Also the city was provisioned for a long siege. But the inhabitants had, with good reason, become cast down from their high confidence, and defiance of Assyria. Although the King had issued no proclamation respecting his treaty of peace with the Assyrian King, preferring to await its completion on both sides, it had become known that some negotiations were in progress; and when Sennacherib passed by Jerusalem without stopping even to examine its defences, or casting a dart against it, it was rumoured that the war was ended. This illusion lasted but a few days. Although Hezekiah endeavoured to keep the tidings of Sennacherib's progress from the people, they saw in the manner and countenance of every messenger who entered the gates that he was the bearer of evil news. And soon it was rumoured abroad that the King of Assyria was besieging the strongly defenced city of Lachish, after taking which he would return to the siege of Jerusalem, and, being in possession of Lachish, and other cities thereabout, would be able thence to check the advance of the Egyptians, should Tirhakah send an army to the relief of Jerusalem.

At last, one morning, the alarm flew rapidly over the city that the Assyrians were again approaching; and soon that part of the wall which commanded a view of the vanguard of the distant host was crowded with citizens, among them Tobias, looking forth with dread curiosity. When they drew near enough, Tobias recognised the familiar ensigns of the Assyrian King's chief officers of the palace, who were also his lieutenants in war.

That same day, while the Assyrian camp was being fixed, the three generals—Rabshakeh, Rabsaris, and Tartan—advanced with a strong guard to the gate nearest to the King's palace on Mount Zion, and took their stand in the highway near the conduit of the upper pool of Gihon. From that position their voices could be heard by the people on the wall; and Rabshakeh, who was familiar with the Hebrew language, and had a voice like that of Stentor, demanded the appearance of Hezekiah, that he might hear a message from Sennacherib, the Great King. The King of Judah, disdaining to answer the summons in person, despatched Shebna, Eliakim, and Joah, charging them to note carefully among them every word of the message, but to answer nothing. When these appeared upon the wall, and asked, in the name of Hezekiah, what the Assyrians would say, Rabshakeh stood forward and said, in a voice loud enough to be heard far around:

“Tell Hezekiah that thus saith the Great King, the King of Assyria: ‘In whom was thy trust and confidence when thou rebelledst against Assyria? Didst thou think in thyself to have had counsel and strength for the war? It was a vain confidence. Didst thou trust to Egypt—even take for a staff that bruised reed upon which if a man lean it will pierce his hand through? So is Pharaoh to all that trust in him. But perhaps you will reply that your trust is in your God, the Lord of these hills. Is not that he whose high places and altars Hezekiah hath removed, and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye

shall worship only before the one altar of the Temple that is in Jerusalem? The God of the Hills is against you, and his oracle hath said unto the King of Assyria 'Go up against this land and destroy it.' Where then is thy trust? Surely not in thine army. Give me hostages and I will lend thee two thousand horses if thou canst find riders able to manage them in battle. Thou canst not; and how then wilt thou be able to turn back even one of the least of my captains? Think not that I have come up without the sanction of the gods against this city. The Lord said to me 'Go up and destroy it.'"

Then Shebna interrupted Rabshakeh, and said:

"We pray thee speak to us in the Assyrian language, for we understand it, and not in the Jews' language, in the hearing of the people that are on the wall."

Rabshakeh, as the envoy of the great Sennacherib, himself familiar with conquests, and used to the complete subjugation of all opponents, had stood in proud attitude, and thrown upon the Jews intimidating glances, as he addressed them. Himself, his fellow generals, and guard of mighty men, a small sample of the great host already encamping against the city, formed a terrible group in the eyes of those who looked down upon them from the wall; and well might the officers of the King of Judah desire the exposure of his weakness, and the terrible menaces of his powerful enemy, to be made in a language unknown to the listening garrison. But Rabshakeh stepped forward yet nearer to the wall, glanced at his interrupter yet more fiercely, and stretching forth his mailed arm, said in a still louder voice:

"Think ye that my master sent me to your master, and to you, alone, to speak these words? Is not my message equally to all these men upon the wall, whose peril is the same as yours; even to warn them that if they continue to obey this obstinate King they will share his penalties? Now hear the message of the Great King, the King of Assyria," continued Rabshakeh, turning from the officers of Hezekiah, and addressing the crowd upon the wall: "He saith 'Let not Hezekiah deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you out of my hand. Nor trust him when he says, that He whom your King calleth the Lord, will save this city. This city is mine, and cannot withstand me. Open its gates to me, pay me a fine, and submit, and it shall be well with you. Then may ye each enjoy your vine, and your fig tree, and drink the water of your own cistern, until I come again and take you to a land as good as this—a land of corn and wine. Beware, lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, 'The Lord will deliver us.' Have any of the nations been yet delivered by their gods out of my hand? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And, nearer still, have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Tell me of any god that hath delivered his land out of my hand! Shall your God, then, deliver Jerusalem?'"

In this style did Rabshakeh continue to address the garrison on the wall, for he was well informed of Hezekiah's proclamation bidding

reliance on the Lord, and wished to weaken its influence with the people. He also knew of Hezekiah's expectations of aid from Egypt, and therefore depreciated that reliance. Rabshakeh also threatened tortures and death to the whole male population should they attempt to maintain the siege after this warning. Thus he hoped to kindle a rebellion against the King of Judah, and win easily the capital; which, if it held out, so strong were its defences, it would probably be the work of years to reduce. And he gave the inhabitants only twenty-four hours in which to consider his advice. If within that time the gates were not opened to him he swore by Asshur that grace should not again be offered to them.

At present no one answered him a word, but when he left with his fellow generals to retire to their pavilions, the people confessed to each other their dismay. Shebna and his companions hastened to the King, and appeared before him with their robes rent, in sign that they brought tidings of immediate peril; for they feared that the people might, in their terror of the Assyrians, adopt the advice of Rabshakeh, and rebel against Hezekiah. The King also, when he heard what Rabshakeh had said to his garrison, rent his robe, and put on sack-cloth. He felt that now indeed his peril was so imminent that only a miraculous interposition of Providence could save him. And to show Isaiah that he discarded his former advisers, and trusted no longer in human alliances, nor stone defences, he sent Shebna, and the elders of the priests, and the chief officer of his palace, all clothed in sack-cloth, to wait humbly upon the prophet, and to say:

"Thus saith Hezekiah: 'This is a day of trouble and rebuke and blasphemy. It may be that the Lord thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the King of Assyria, his master, hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove his blasphemy. Therefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left of our people.'"

At the same time Hezekiah hastened to the temple to pray.

The prophet replied through Eliakim, who was a good man, and beloved by him, and sent a comforting message to the King, since he now put his whole trust in God alone; and bade him assemble the people in the East Street in the morning, that they might hear from him the word of the Lord.

When at the proper time the criers had been through the streets and bazaars of Jerusalem, and announced that the prophet would speak in the East Street, which was the widest street in the city, a great multitude assembled there. The King also was there with the chief officers of the palace, the Princes and Captains of Judah, the Judges, the Priests, and the Elders. The King, clothed in sack-cloth, sat in his chariot near the rostrum, from which Isaiah spoke as follows:

"Hear, O remnant of Israel, the word of the Lord which He hath spoken against a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers and corruptors, who have forsaken the Lord, and provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger. For although ye draw near to Him with your lips, your hearts are far from Him.

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated

between you and your God, and your sins have made Him hide His face from you ; and now is your head sick and your heart faint.

“O nation of hypocrites ! saith the Lord, who approach me with loud prayers, while your hearts enclose sin as in a casket ; think ye that I am deaf, or rather, do not ye pray to be heard of men ? I love better silent lips with a meek and contrite heart, than the loud prayers which are framed to sound well in human ears. Therefore, when ye spread forth your hands I hide mine eyes from you, and when ye make many prayers I will not hear.

“And to what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me ? saith the Lord : I am sick of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts ; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of goats. Bring no more vain oblations ; incense is an abomination to me ; your religious ceremonies have become grievous to me. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth : they are a trouble to me ; I am weary of them ; because ye are an unrighteous people. I prefer loving-kindness to all rites ; and purity of life to all ceremonies.

“Your fasts, too, are the fasts of hypocrites, because ye are unrighteous. Think ye that I will accept this as a fast, a day for a man to afflict his soul ? Wilt thou call this a fast and acceptable to the Lord, for a man to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sack-cloth and ashes under him ?

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen ?—to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens of the yoke, and to let the broken go free ? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are afflicted to thy house ? When thou seest the naked that thou cover him ? But this ye have not done.

“Therefore, thus saith the Lord, The Assyrian is the rod of mine anger. It was I who sent him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath did I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets, And in this the Assyrian oracle lied not.”

At these words the people were much moved, as well as the King, the Priests, and the Princes ; for Rabshakeh had said, “Think not that I have come up without the sanction of the gods against this city. The Lord said to me, ‘Go up and destroy it.’” Thus the prophet was adding weight to the threats of Rabshakeh. Without interruption, however, he continued :

“Therefore your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire : strangers devour your land in your presence. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the Lord of Hosts had left this remnant we should have been already as Sodom and as Gomorrah.

“And woe to the rebellious children ! saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me ; that look to Egypt for aid, but have not asked at my mouth ; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt. The strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. For the Egyptian shall rise to help you in vain and

to no purpose. And I have already cried to you concerning this, that your strength was to sit still and trust in the Lord of Hosts. Thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning to me, and resting upon my deliverance shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. But ye would not. Ye said, No; for at the worst we will flee upon horses. Therefore shall ye flee. And ye said, We will ride upon the swift. Therefore those that pursue you shall be swifter.

"Now thus saith the Lord: I have a vineyard on a very fruitful hill: I fenced it and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and made a wine-press therein: and I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. And this vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah His pleasant vine!"

While the prophet was speaking in a loud and clear voice all the people listened with solemn attention, as the prisoner on trial waits and listens eagerly for the verdict of life or death. The general trust had still been in the advance of the hosts of Egypt and Ethiopia, and the chance of their success against the Assyrians in a great battle. But now, what Rabshakeh had only yesterday predicted, their own prophet Isaiah confirmed; namely, that Egypt should be to them as a bruised reed for a staff. At the end of the parable of the vineyard the prophet was interrupted by the cries and groans of the multitude, who were dismayed and repentant in their extremity; and many prayed aloud for deliverance from the threatened calamity; at this time with their hearts as well as their lips. The Princes and rulers also stood humbled and self-convicted before the prophet. The priests, too, were abashed with the consciousness that they had encouraged sacrifices and ceremonies more than morality, righteousness, and loving-kindness. Shebna was not so much humbled as mortified; for he felt that his influence was being destroyed, and his position threatened, by the impressive eloquence of the prophet.

At length the King stood up in his chariot and signed to the people that he would speak to them—kingly even in his robe of sack-cloth, and said:

"Hear me, O men of Judah, children of rebuke. This is indeed a day of trouble and humiliation. Great have been the sins of Israel, and just is the anger of the Lord against us. But our God is a God of Mercy. Remember how often He hath extended forgiveness to His repentant people. Repent therefore of your secret sins and

hypocrisy, and beseech Heaven to spare this remnant that is left in Zion. Let every man and every woman make this a day of prayer, crying heartily that the enemy may be turned away from us, and that the rod of the Lord's anger may afflict us no longer. It may be that the Lord will hear the prayer of His people, and of His servant the prophet."

Then said Isaiah :

"Now hear ye again the word of the Lord, who heareth your cries to Him even now. Ye have been a deceitful and foolish people, thinking to deceive even the Lord your God, as well as man, by your vain rites, and sacrifices, and fasts, forgetting that the Lord seeth not as man seeth ; for man can judge only from appearances, but the Lord looketh on the heart. Now repent ye, even now, and forsake your evil ways, and set yourselves to walk truly in the ways of the Lord, beseeching Him to incline your hearts to truth and righteousness. For the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

"Come now and let us reason together ! saith the Lord ; though your sins be as scarlet I can make them as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as bleached wool, if ye be willing and obedient. But if ye refuse and continue in rebellion against me, ye shall be devoured with the sword. For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Now let this be a day of humiliation and prayer, and of alms to the poor, until I call you again to hear further the word of the Lord. Cry to the Lord as David the King cried in his day of bitter repentance :

"'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean : wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation ; and uphold me with Thy spirit. O Lord open Thou my lips ; and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise. For Thou desirest not sacrifice ; Thou delightest not in burnt offerings ; or I would give it. The sacrifice acceptable to Thee is a broken spirit : a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.'"

These words were repeated after the prophet with fervour, by all those before him, to whom they were familiar.

Then all the people dispersed to their houses, or to their various posts in the forts ; to humble themselves and pray for the salvation of Zion ; except those who crowded the courts of the Temple and prayed there. Thither also the King repaired, and spent the day in prayer and fasting.

Tobias had secured a position near the rostrum very early in the morning, in company with his friend the son of Abner, who was a firm believer in and admirer of Isaiah, while he was dissatisfied with the priests as we have already seen, and rather sceptical of the divine origin of some of the laws of Moses, and he had never failed to attend when the prophet was announced to preach in the Temple. And the young Naphtalian was greatly delighted at this opportunity to see and hear distinctly this venerable man, who besides being a man of great

learning, a sublime poet, and a brilliant orator, was, he felt assured, the true Oracle of the only God. Beautiful, and radiant with holy satisfaction, was his countenance as he regarded the prophet, with loving and fixed attention of ear and eye, during this brief sermon; and never was heart more appreciative of the words of a divine preacher than was the heart of Tobias on this memorable occasion. The holy sympathy and happy love with which he felt his soul drawn towards the prophet, although a new feeling, seemed to him like a repetition of something of the kind once before briefly experienced. He pondered where and when could have been the occasion; and remembered that it was in his dream of Heaven, when Raphael had walked with him in loving converse through the Happy Vale of the River of Life.

With such feelings towards the prophet, how happy was Tobias when the former, on descending from the rostrum to go to his house, and passing near where the youth stood reverently regarding him, suddenly paused, placed his holy hands upon the head of the Naphtalian, and blessed him. Tobias now felt that it was worth immeasurably more than all the prolonged sufferings which had resulted to him from that journey to Jerusalem, thus at last to have gained the direct blessing of the Prophet of God, in addition to the personal commendations of the King of Judah.

It cannot fail to strike the reader how emphatic in this brief sermon of the great prophet, himself familiar with God, was his denunciation of the mere rites and ceremonies of religion, to the very faces of the priests. And his teaching was the inspired condemnation of the pride of sacerdotalism in the day of its power and fashion, in anticipation of that mighty Christianity whose great mission was to emancipate mankind from the blasphemous arrogance of all human priesthoods which pretended to exercise the power of mediation between God and fellow men. And these immortal words of the prophet condemn as emphatically all those who again seek to impose upon mankind a false priesthood, propped up with vain rites and ceremonies, and cunningly based upon the superstitions which they encourage, and to which the hearts of the learned and powerful are as prone to yield, as those of the ignorant and simple. The restoration aimed at is that of the most subtle, cruel and dangerous power which ever enthralled mankind, body and soul. Let the ruins of the castles and abbeys of this land be each an eloquent monument of warning to all who harbour the dark design of again subjecting the sovereign people to an ambitious priesthood.

CHAPTER XLIII.

“COMFORT YE, COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE.”



TOWARDS evening the prophet Isaiah sent another comforting message to the King, and desired that the people might be once more gathered together in the East Street near the gate of the city. And there the prophet again addressed them, saying :

“Thus saith the Lord : Comfort ye, comfort ye my people ; speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned : the extent of my mercy shall double the extent of all her sins.”

At these words the multitude were very much moved, and there was a great murmur of weeping and sobbing for joy at this promised deliverance. For the people had at length arrived at that condition of mind, that they could receive with implicit confidence the words of the prophet, and through his promise feel their deliverance sure. There were, as might be expected, some exceptions among so great a multitude ; and one of those who did not believe the prophet—unless the deliverance should happen by means of the Egyptian army—was Shebna. And as he stood near Isaiah, among the group of officers attendant upon the King, the prophet read his incredulity in his countenance, and noted it, and continued :

“But woe to those who would still go down to Egypt for help ; and depend upon horses, and trust in chariots, because of their numbers ; and in horsemen because of their great strength ; that look not unto the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the help of the Lord. Towards such will He not call back His threats, but will punish them, with all that continue to be evil-doers. Now the Egyptians are men, and not God ; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord shall stretch forth His hand, both he that helpeth and he that is helped shall fall together.”

The prophet was now interrupted by a great clamour outside the gate. During all that day the Assyrians had been making demonstrations against each of the various gates of Jerusalem, making a great noise thereat, and “crying with a loud voice in the Jews’ speech to the people that were on the wall, to affright them, and to trouble them”—hoping to gain admission to the city by intimidating them from their allegiance to Hezekiah. And when now towards evening

they saw that the wall about the gate of the East Street was unusually crowded—for many had clustered there to listen to the prophet, the wide street below being thronged—a large band under Rabshakeh himself approached close to the gate, and the General again demanded immediate admission in the name of his master the King of Assyria, repeating the threats before-named in case of refusal. The noise of his approach, and his loud voice, being heard through the closed gate, interrupted the prophet.

When Rabshakeh had ceased to speak, and there was silence for the answer, Isaiah cried in a loud voice, that he might be heard by those outside, as well as by the great crowd before him and upon the wall :

“Fear not his words, O people of Jerusalem ! Ye have now the Lord’s assurance of your salvation.”

Then Rabshakeh laughed insolently, and railed against the God of Judah, and repeated his threats that Jerusalem should follow the fate of Samaria and Damascus, and the other kingdoms of the gods whose graven images excelled those of Jerusalem.

And Isaiah rejoined with utterances of vigorous anger and inspiration :

“And because the Assyrian is puffed up with pride, and deemeth that he is acting by his own might and wisdom, and because he raileth against the Holy One of Israel, who raised him up to be the rod of His anger and the staff of His indignation against the wicked, therefore, saith the Lord, will I punish the pride of his stout heart, when I have performed my whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem ; and I will dim the glory of his high looks. It was I who raised him up to do my will, but his heart doth not think so. He thinketh still to destroy and cut off nations not a few, and saith boastingly, Are not my Princes altogether Kings ? Has not Calneh shared the fate of Carchemish ; Hamath that of Arpad ; and Samaria that of Damascus ? As my hand and the hand of my fathers have taken kingdoms in spite of their gods, whose graven images excelled those of Jerusalem and of Samaria, shall I not, as my father did to Samaria and her gods, so do to Jerusalem and her God ? By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom ; for I am prudent. And I have removed the bounds of the peoples, and have taken their treasures. And I have put down the peoples like a valiant man ; and my hand hath found their riches, as one gathereth eggs from a nest when there is no bird to move a wing in their defence, or to open the mouth, or even to peep.

“Thus hath Rabshakeh boasted in the name of his master to affright you, O redeemed of Jerusalem !

“Now should the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith ? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it ? Because the Assyrian magnifieth himself against the Lord of Hosts, the Lord shall send among his fat ones leanness ; his glory shall be as thorns and briars, and the Lord shall kindle a fire under it. And the Light of Israel shall be for a fire, and the Holy One for a flame ; and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day !”

Rabshakeh had signed for silence among his soldiers while the prophet was uttering this denunciation, and had listened to it with contemptuous attention ; and now said in a voice far louder than that of Isaiah :

“ Now listen to me, men of Jerusalem ! Consider for yourselves if ye have not gathered yourselves together to listen to a madman ; and whether any but fools would follow the counsels of such a one. Is not this he who remained in his house unclothed for three whole years, alleging that he did so in the service of his God, and for a sign against Egypt and Ethiopia ? Thus have we been told, and ye know if it be true or not. Surely ye are a city of fools if ye follow the counsels of a madman, raving as ye have even now heard ; and cling to a King like this Hezekiah, who, having rebelled against his master, my lord the King of Assyria, hath left his people to suffer for his fault, without once coming out of his stronghold to face my lord the King, or any of his captains in the field. Why should ye also perish in trusting to this foolish and cowardly King, with the example before you of all the other cities of Judah, whose inhabitants have perished, or been led captive, while trusting to their false Prince to deliver them ? Even now my master the Great King saith—Trust in me, for I am your King, and your city is mine. Open its gates to me now, and it shall be well with you. But if ye refuse to-day, to-morrow ye shall not choose : for this city will I take, and its inhabitants will I utterly destroy with the sword.”

The fears of some of the people returned at hearing these threats ; and the King, too, felt greatly the humiliation of the charges and taunts of Rabshakeh, made in the hearing of his assembled subjects. Isaiah alone replied, and said :

“ Hear the word of the Lord : Fear not the threats of the Assyrian, O my people ! The daughter of Zion shall laugh him to scorn ; the King of Assyria shall not take this city. He shall hear a rumour and recall his host. And I will send a blast upon him, and he shall depart and return to his own land ; and even there will I cause him to fall by the sword.

“ Now get you to your houses, and rejoice, with praises to the Holy One, for the salvation of Jerusalem is sure.”

The people then dispersed, much comforted by the words of Isaiah. And the Assyrians descended to their camp ; railing and laughing at the Jews, their King, their prophet, and the extraordinary pretensions of the latter on behalf of his God.

“ Thorns and briars : ” How just is this estimate of the so-called glory of robber Kings and Emperors ! And how fitly expressed was Sennacherib’s boast of such robberies and the other depredations of royal bandits : “ By the strength of my hand I have done it. . . . And I have removed the bounds of the peoples, and I have taken their treasures. And I have put down the peoples like a valiant man, and my hand hath found their riches, as one gathereth eggs from a nest when there is no bird to move a wing in their defence, or to open the mouth, or even to peep.” For this robber of nests had put down their protectors by the slaughter of tens of thousands, and by taking

captive and removing from their homes other tens of thousands, who had done him and his nation no wrong. And all this rapine of the "valiant man" was done by the wrongful exercise of that power which is entrusted to rulers of communities for the sole purpose of defending the right, and chastising the wrong. Yet this slaughter and robbery, because carried on on a stupendous scale, and in successful defiance of all civil rights and civil laws, is called glorious war. But a conquest of peaceful peoples by means of bloodshed, and the enforcement of tribute by the strong against the unoffending weak, are as truly murder and robbery as the similar acts of the skulking bandit. The leader of the superior power is called a conqueror, and his acts glorious; while he is truly a mere magnified bandit, with the power to evade civil law and punishment.

CHAPTER XLIV.

RETIREMENT OF THE ASSYRIANS FROM BEFORE JERUSALEM.—SENNACHERIB DEFEATS TIRHAKAH THE ETHIOPIAN.

IN the early morning, as soon as the watchmen could discern the Assyrian camp from the towers of Jerusalem, they perceived that the tents were being struck, and that divisions of the army were already on the march southward. The rumour soon ran through the city, and, presently, the wall was crowded with citizens who looked wonderingly at these movements; until the voice of the prophet Micah was heard among them saying:

“Behold; this is the beginning of the fulfilment of the words of the prophet Isaiah: He shall hear a rumour and recall his host.”

And so it was. During the night Rabshakeh had received a despatch from Sennacherib, dated from before Libnah, for he had already taken Lachish, commanding him to break up the camp before Jerusalem, and immediately rejoin the King at Libnah, where the latter was gathering all his power to meet Pharaoh Tirhakah. For Sennacherib had heard that the ruler of Egypt and Ethiopia was approaching with a great host; having contrived to keep secret his advance until he was only about three days' rapid march from Libnah. And, even then, Sennacherib had only learned of his approach through the capture of one of several Hebrew messengers which the Ethiopian had sent by various routes to Hezekiah, desiring him to be prepared to attack the Assyrians in the rear when Pharaoh should commence the battle with an extended front.

Tirhakah, or Tarhaco Sabaco, was a foe not to be despised; even by Sennacherib. He was the third King of that powerful Meroe dynasty which had been established in Egypt by Sabaco the First, King of the African Cush, or Ethiopia; and still united the rule of the Egyptians with that of the then warlike and numerous Ethiopians, under the title of Pharaoh, or the Sun, Emperor of the West.

Sennacherib believed that to conquer this mighty Prince would be to secure the undisputed empire of the whole world, from the rising to the setting sun; and he now speedily prepared for that event by combining all his power of arms and counsel.

It had been the purpose of the Assyrian King first to complete the subjugation of Judea, and then attempt the conquest of Egypt; but, by the unexpected advance of Tirhakah into Syria, he now hoped to crush the power of his rival, before invading the western kingdoms. The advance of the Ethiopian was unexpected, because, hitherto, the

Meroe Pharaohs had failed to march out of their country to the aid of those who depended upon them, even although they had accepted the presents which had been sent to them to win their protection. Therefore it was that Sennacherib had compared Egypt to a bruised reed for a staff, and one which, instead of affording support to him who leaned upon it, would pierce his hand. Notably King Hoshea had proved it so when, preferring the alliance of Egypt to that of Assyria, he sent to Sevechus Sabaco, or So, the father of Tirhakah, that yearly tribute which he had hitherto paid to the Kings of Assyria. But when Shalmanezzer marched an army against Samaria, to punish its King for his secession, the powerful Sabaco, to whose friendship he had seceded, left him, unaided, to the vengeance of his previous suzerain. And, thus far, it had appeared that Hezekiah would be in the same manner neglected by the son of Sevechus, since Tirhakah had so long delayed to come up against the Eastern Conqueror, that the kingdom of Tyre was already destroyed, and that of Hezekiah on the verge of utter ruin.

On the same night that Sennacherib's messengers reached Rabshakeh, those of Tirhakah arrived at Jerusalem with letters for Hezekiah; wherein, besides requesting the Jewish King to come out of his stronghold and attack the Assyrian camp with all the forces he could muster, Pharaoh desired to have sent to him, immediately, a general of experience in leading Hebrew troops, who might take command of the host of Jews that had fled into Egypt, and were now returning under the Egyptian standard, confident of the defeat of the Assyrian, and of the recovery of their abandoned lands.

The views of Shebna, even yet, remained uninfluenced by the preaching and prophecies of Isaiah; and he trusted to no miracle to check the invader. Coincidental as was this sudden departure of Rabshakeh, with the words of the prophet uttered only on the previous evening, Shebna saw natural and sufficient reason why the Cupbearer should temporarily abandon the siege, to rejoin his imperial master with the three important divisions of the army, which he, with Tartan and Rabsaris, commanded, in the now authenticated news of the approach of the hosts of Egypt and Ethiopia. To the latter Shebna still looked for the discomfiture of the Assyrians. The Sabacoes of Ethiopia had proved hitherto invincible; so, indeed, had the Assyrians; but Shebna fully shared that Israelitish prejudice in favour of Egypt, which had caused the Kings both of the Ten, and of the Two tribes, to turn towards it, since the establishment of its Meroe dynasty, in preference to Assyria. The Treasurer therefore urged immediate compliance with the letter of Pharaoh, and would have had the King prepare, at once, to march out of Jerusalem, with all its male population, except a few guards over the gates; and, at evening, follow the footsteps of Rabshakeh's army. He also besought the King to let him depart, immediately, with his own guards and servants only, and the chariots which he maintained at his own expense, that he might, by a circuitous route, hasten to join the Egyptian army; and, as Pharaoh had desired, take command of its Hebrew division. This counsel, though bold and daring, would at

any previous time have been accepted by the King as prudent and proper. In Hezekiah's former victorious wars with the Phœnicians, Shebna had ever proved himself a wise and valiant general, and no other, except the King himself, was so likely to inspire the returning Hebrew fugitives with courage and confidence, to do their part manfully beside their Egyptian allies in the approaching conflict with the Assyrians. Also, had not the prophet forbidden the Egyptian alliance, Hezekiah would have felt that it was but his honourable duty to march his garrison against the Assyrian rear, as Pharaoh had suggested ; and, even now, his first feeling was that not to do so, when Pharaoh had at length come up to his aid, was to risk the charge of craven cowardice, and the ultimate animosity of the Egyptians, whatever the issue of the battle. The King of Judah, however, was no longer to be guided by his late adviser, nor even by his own judgment of what was right and honourable. The prophet had supplanted both ; and the King determined to follow loyally whatever course Isaiah should suggest. He therefore sent Shebna, Eliakim, and Joah, to the prophet, with the message of Tirhakah, asking how he must act.

Thus to be made the King's humble messenger to his now ascendant rival, to receive and carry that counsel which it had hitherto been his own part proudly to give, was bitter to the pride of Shebna. Yet the prophet would not even deign to reply through him, but addressing himself to Eliakim said :

"Say to the King that the word which the Lord hath already spoken shall not fail. The Lord is against the Egyptians and Ethiopians, and will stretch forth His hand against them, and against all who trust to their help. Have I not already declared in the hearing of the King and of the people, that, Both he that helpeth and he that is helped shall fall together ? The Assyrian is the Lord's rod against Egypt and Ethiopia, and against those who trust in their standard of Shadowing Wings. Take no heed, therefore, of the message of the Ethiopian."

This reply being repeated to the King, he determined not to act upon the message of Pharaoh ; although it was still boldly urged by Shebna that he was bound, both by honour and religion, to do so. The Treasurer ventured to say that as the advice of Isaiah was to act dishonourably it could not be the inspiration of God : that just and honourable dealing was an inseparable part of religion : that it would be a most unjust and dishonourable act to neglect a friend and ally when he was about to engage in battle ; heinously so to leave that ally at a cruel disadvantage when, relying upon our willingness to aid ourselves and him, he came out to fight in our quarrel. In addition to this question of honour and justice, Shebna urged that should Tirhakah be defeated all the world, for ever, would charge Hezekiah with the disaster ; for having withheld those forces which might have turned the scale against Assyria. And that, should Tirhakah beat the Assyrians, he would doubtless become as much, and with more reason, the enemy of Judah, as Sennacherib had been, because of the jeopardy in which he had been left by the non-appearance of the reinforcement which Hezekiah had been warned to send.

To all this Hezekiah condescended to listen, and to reply that had Tirhakah come up from Egypt merely as the ally of Judah, he would have come earlier, before the kingdom had been desolated by the enemy, and then an effective army might have been expected to be raised to co-operate with the Egyptians. But since Tirhakah had waited until every city of Judah and Benjamin, except Libnah and the capital, had been taken, and their defenders put to the sword, to flight, or sent into captivity, before rising against the invader, his late coming might with more reason be attributed to motives of self-protection, in anticipation of Sennacherib's invasion of Egypt, than the protection of Judah, already desolated; and that therefore Hezekiah was at liberty to decline to forsake his only remaining stronghold, Jerusalem, and so risk its future successful resistance of a possible siege, by leading out its garrison. The dependence on Egypt had so far entirely failed, as the prophet had from the first predicted; and the King declared that he had repented of that forbidden reliance on human aid, and would henceforth put his trust only in God, to save the remnant and restore the kingdom.

Thus the King of Judah and his chief minister differed, and the arguments of neither influenced the views of the other. The Treasurer saw that his personal influence with the King was entirely at an end for the present, if not for ever; for ever should the word of Isaiah hold good, and the Egyptians fail; or until the word of the prophet should fail, by the triumph of the Egyptians; and he quickly resolved to adopt a course which should either aid to increase his future influence in the latter event, or leave him the credit, as he thought, of falling patriotically if the former should be realized. He reflected that should the Egyptians be defeated, and the ascendancy of Isaiah confirmed, his own position would become intolerable to him, and he deemed it better to fall in company with the allies of his country, and partly save the reputation of his King, than remain in the city a disgraced favourite, the future object of the scorn of his enemies and false friends. On the other hand, should the Egyptians overcome the Assyrians, as he confidently believed they would, and he, even without the King's consent, should have commanded in the victorious army, the success of his counsel and his services would condone his patriotic disobedience; and by his presence, and his excuses for Hezekiah, he would be able to retain the friendship of Pharaoh for his own King.

Thus reasoned the high-minded Treasurer; and he gave secret notice to the chief of his servants, and to the captain of his guards, to have all his followers, his horses, and his chariots in readiness to leave the city by the Egyptian gate at midnight. To prevent the frustration of his plan by its premature discovery to the King, Shebna commanded profound secrecy, stating that the strict privacy of the expedition was of the utmost importance to its success, and to the King's interests. He also sent forward scouts to watch the route he intended to take, and to give him warning of any danger that might lie in his path. And at midnight he succeeded in quitting Jerusalem.

Thus came about the departure of Shebna from Jerusalem, and

the consequent separation of his future fortunes from those of his fellow-citizens. While doubting, and proving his doubt, of the validity of the prophecies of Isaiah, he was working their accomplishment; even separating himself from the marvellous salvation of Jerusalem, to enter the path leading to a great battle, a terrible defeat, and "a mighty captivity" of the Egyptians and Ethiopians, in which Shebna would share, being tossed "like a ball into a large country," where the chariots of his glory, becoming the trophies of Assyrian victory, would prove the shame of his lord's house.

We shall not wait to describe the tremendous conflict in which Sennacherib defeated Pharaoh Tirhakah. The slaughter on both sides was far greater than in any previous battle which had been fought by the Assyrians; not only because the combatants were more numerous, but because of their equally matched courage and firmness. The Egyptians on this occasion exerted the same remarkable qualities with which, at a later day, their descendants excited the admiration of Cyrus the Great; and the Ethiopians, although they could not exhibit greater courage and discipline than their fellow subjects, even surpassed them in physical strength. They, like the ancestors of the Assyrians, were mighty hunters; their land and rivers being prolific of savage and monstrous creatures, which kept their manhood in constant exercise. In Ethiopia there flourished the leopard, the hippopotamus, huge alligators and serpents, the wild elephant, the hyena, the gorilla, the rhinoceros, the lion, and other savage creatures, in such abundance that everyone who would go outside the cities became, for self-preservation, a constant hunter of such noble game. Accustomed to such sport, they were fearless warriors. And when the superior tactics of Sennacherib gave the Assyrians the advantage in the battle, and rendered all but certain the ultimate defeat of the western host, every soldier of the latter stood firm and faced the enemy, until they were either slain, or, being disabled, were taken captive. None attempted to fly until night interrupted the conflict, and then so hopelessly few, comparatively, of the Egyptians remained that they retreated.

Sennacherib had been very desirous to take Tirhakah alive, and carry him to Nineveh, the more so because the greatest of the other Kings, whose dominions he had subdued, had managed to escape; therefore he charged Rabshakeh to make it his special business to capture Tirhakah, and to see that he did not afterwards escape, as Merodach-Baladan had done. During the battle, however, the Cup-bearer had found it impossible to reach Pharaoh, so loyally and stoutly were he and the winged ensign defended; although many thousands fell in the defence, and indeed also in the attack; and when darkness came on, although comparatively few of the Egyptians and Ethiopians remained, the assigned task of Rabshakeh was still more difficult of accomplishment, and Tirhakah escaped. The flying Egyptians were discovered in the morning by a detachment of Assyrians which had been despatched towards the desert on the afternoon of the battle in anticipation of fugitives. Wearied beyond the power of resistance, they were surrounded and disarmed, and

ultimately stripped and sent captive to Nineveh. Tirhakah, with his mounted Ethiopian guard and some led horses, succeeded in evading the Assyrians, but instead of returning to Memphis he determined to abandon altogether the kingdom of Egypt, and directed his steps through the land whence come the young and old lion, the viper and flying fiery serpent, towards the island city of Meroe, in Ethiopia, the residence of his ancestors before the conquest of Egypt by Sabaco the First. Tirhakah thus abandoned Egypt, not wholly because of his defeat by Sennacherib, but because that defeat inclined him to believe a prophecy which he had before discredited. When Sabaco conquered Egypt, fifty years previously, the Ethiopian oracle had declared that the Meroe rule over that country would last for fifty years and no longer. Tirhakah's attention had been drawn to this prophecy very recently, but he had dismissed it from his thoughts as unworthy of credence. The signal disaster, however, which he had now experienced he attributed to the Fate which had inspired the oracle, and submitted to its decree by acknowledging his kingly power in Egypt at an end.

We are aware that our account of these events differs from that of Josephus, who speaks of the failure of Sennacherib's designs against the Egyptians, overlooking the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah that the Egyptians and Ethiopians and all who trusted to their aid should fall together, and that "the King of Assyria should lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot." And that the Jews should "be ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation and Egypt their glory."

Josephus wrote as though the Egyptians and Ethiopians were under separate rule at that time, thus: "He [Sennacherib] spent a long time in the siege of Pelusium; and when the banks that he had raised over against the walls were of a great height, and when he was ready to make an immediate assault upon them, but heard that Tirhaka, king of the Ethiopians, was coming, and bringing great forces to aid the Egyptians, and was resolved to march through the desert, and so to fall directly upon the Assyrians, this King Sennacherib was disturbed at the news; and, as I said before, left Pelusium, and returned back without success. Now concerning this Sennacherib, Herodotus also says, in the second book of his histories, how 'this king came against the Egyptian king, who was the priest of Vulcan; and that as he was besieging Pelusium he broke up the siege on the following occasion: This Egyptian priest prayed to God, and God heard his prayer, and sent a judgment upon the Arabian king.' But in this Herodotus was mistaken when he called this king not king of the Assyrians, but of the Arabians; for he saith, that 'a multitude of mice gnawed to pieces in one night both the bows and the rest of the armour of the Assyrians; and that it was on that account that the king, when he had no bows left, drew off his army from Pelusium.'"

Thus Josephus wrote, and quoted from Herodotus. By putting together the brief allusion to Tirhakah in the "Kings" and the version of Sennacherib's invasion of Egypt by Herodotus he came to his conclusions. But Josephus gave credit to what was erroneous in

the accounts of the Greek historian, and corrected him where no correction was needed. Herodotus spoke of Sennacherib as King of the "Arabians and Assyrians," which was true, since he and his predecessors had established their suzerainty over Arabia. Herodotus wrote his histories more than two hundred and fifty years after the reign of Sennacherib, and says that he gained his information of Egyptian History from conversations with the Egyptian priests. Coming down to the reign of Anysis, the blind King, he says: "During his reign, the Ethiopians, and Sabacon, king of the Ethiopians, invaded Egypt with a large force; whereupon this blind king fled to the fens; and the Ethiopian reigned over Egypt for fifty years." At the conclusion of the history of the Ethiopian he says: "As the time was expired during which it was foretold that he should reign over Egypt, he would depart from the country; for while he was yet in Ethiopia the oracles which the Ethiopians have recourse to answered that he was fated to reign over Egypt fifty years. Since, then, this period had elapsed, and the vision of the dream troubled him, Sabacon of his own accord withdrew from Egypt. When, therefore, the Ethiopian departed from Egypt the blind king resumed the government, having returned from the fens, where he had lived fifty years, having formed an island of ashes and earth. For when any of the Egyptians came to him bringing provisions, as they were severally ordered, unknown to the Ethiopian, he bade them bring some ashes also as a present. No one before Amyrtæus was able to discover this island; but for more than seven hundred years the kings who preceded Amyrtæus were unable to find it out: the name of this island was Elbo; its size is about ten stades in each direction.

"After him reigned the priest of Vulcan, whose name was Sethon: he held in no account and despised the military caste of the Egyptians, as not having need of their services; and, accordingly, among other indignities, he took away their lands; to each of whom, under former kings, twelve chosen aruras had been assigned. After this Senacherib, king of the Arabians and Assyrians, marched a large army against Egypt; whereupon the Egyptian warriors refused to assist him; and the priest, being reduced to a strait, entered the temple, and bewailed before the image the calamities he was in danger of suffering. While he was lamenting sleep fell upon him, and it appeared to him in a vision that the god stood by and encouraged him, assuring him that he should suffer nothing disagreeable in meeting the Arabian army, for he would himself send assistants to him. Confiding in this vision, he took with him such of the Egyptians as were willing to follow him, and encamped in Pelusium, for here the entrance into Egypt is; but none of the military caste followed him, but tradesmen, mechanics, and sutlers. When they arrived there a number of field mice, pouring in upon their enemies, devoured their quivers and their bows, and, moreover, the handles of their shields; so that on the next day, when they fled bereft of their arms, many of them fell. And to this day a stone statue of this king stands in the temple of Vulcan, with a mouse in his hand, and an inscription to the following effect: 'Whoever looks on me, let him revere the gods.'

“Thus much of the account the Egyptians and the priests related.”

These traditions of events happening, or supposed to have happened, so long before they were related to Herodotus, were, as might be expected, a combination of fact, fiction, error, and confusion. The period of the reigns of the three Meroe Sabacoës is made the period of the rule of one King Sabacon. An island is said to have been formed by the blind King Anysis, whose reign would be less than three hundred years before the time of Herodotus, yet the latter relates that it was discovered seven hundred years afterwards, and not until then. Possibly before the news of the victory of Sennacherib reached Memphis, certainly not long after, came, in apparent contradiction of it, the tidings of the miraculous destruction of the Assyrians. Various would be the versions of the marvellous catastrophe. It was so noised abroad that Hezekiah “was magnified in the sight of all nations from henceforth.” Tradition would preserve, yet confuse, the story; which, indeed, would be confused from the first; and, generations later, the Egyptians claimed that it was a King of theirs that had been miraculously saved, because the thing happened about the time when their King was at war with Assyria. This error was communicated by the Egyptian priests to Herodotus, and accepted from the latter by Josephus. Of this, however, we will speak again after the close of the next chapter, saying no more now on this subject than that it was inscribed on the great bulls in the King’s palace at Nineveh, where the acts of Sennacherib were chronicled, that after taking the cities of Hezekiah he was opposed by an army of Egyptians and Ethiopians; that Sennacherib joined battle with them and totally defeated them, capturing the charioteers of their King.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE PRIDE OF SENNACHERIB.—REVELRY BEFORE DESTRUCTION.—
THE BLAST.



WHEN Sennacherib first started on his victorious career, it had been his daily habit to supplicate the gods for their assistance, and to ascribe every success to their aid. He would say in his speeches and despatches "By the aid of Asshur" or "With the assistance of the gods" I have done this or that. After awhile, however, with each new success, his mistaken piety diminished, and his self-reliance increased; until, in course of time, he neglected either to supplicate or thank the Heavenly powers. He even grew too proud to confess, as he had hitherto done, that he was dependent upon them; and consented to the flattery of those who declared that his unchecked successes were due only to his own prudence, and the invincibility of his power. Belib, the King of Babylon, who had joined the Syrian campaign with his Babylonian contingent, wrote and said very flattering things about the Great King; but, in celebrating his wonderful successes, Belib never went further in adulation than to style him The Favoured of the Gods: The Beloved of Asshur: The Thunder of the Lord of Heaven: The Eagle of Jove: and such like poetic hyperboles. Others of Sennacherib's generals and heralds had vaunted for him that no gods could deliver their nations out of his hands. Now, Sennacherib himself began to assert the same. The victory over Tirhakah and his host was by far the most important and hard-earned success that he had yet achieved; and his pride was correspondingly increased. He was even led to believe that he was more than human, and superior to the gods of all the nations; since they had failed to deliver their people out of his hand. Even the gods of Egypt and Ethiopia had failed to deliver their votaries, who were defeated beneath their sacred banner of the Shadowing Wings. The God of Judah, or, "of the Hills," had failed to withhold from him the fenced cities of the Jews. Only Libnah and Jerusalem remained unchastised for their resistance; the former must yield immediately, and the latter soon: then the Great King, the master of the whole earth, would be at liberty either to march westward, or southward, to receive the homage and treasures of conquered Egypt and Ethiopia; or return, and make a triumphal entry into his capital, and rest there for awhile, the undisputed Emperor of his race. After this last great success Rabshakeh, and others of the

King's officers, went so far as to declare that their lord was in reality a god, superior to all the heroes of antiquity. Rabshakeh was learned, and quoted the accounts of the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Hebrews, and the Grecians, of those early days when gods, and the sons of the gods, visited the earth, and familiarized themselves with the sons and daughters of Adam, taking interest and part in their affairs. He declared that the time had come round again for the appearance of the celestials among mankind, and that Sennacherib was one, and the first, of them. This theory the army adopted with acclamation; and the King impiously accepted. It was declared that no god had been, nor would be, able to prevail against the King. In this spirit a letter was written to Hezekiah, on the day succeeding the victory over the Egyptians, which Sennacherib confirmed and signed, declaring that the Great King was the Supreme of the earth, whose dominion no god could prevent, and that it was in vain for Hezekiah to think of holding his capital. In this letter reference was again made to the fate of many other nations whose gods were unable to deliver them from the King of Assyria; and the latter urged upon the King of Judah that it would be wise for him to submit at once to the inevitable, rather than provoke still more dangerous anger by holding out, and necessitating the pains of a regular siege. As to the God of Judah, Sennacherib said: "Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria."

Although not doubting the power of God to save him, and his capital, Hezekiah was not indifferent to these renewed threats, accompanied as they were with the tidings of the utter destruction of Tirhakah's great army; and he went up into the temple, and spreading the letter of Sennacherib before the Cherubim of the Ark, prayed for a fresh assurance of deliverance from his threatening adversary, and for divine guidance in replying to him. Hezekiah had no sooner reached his palace, on his return from the temple, than there arrived a messenger from the prophet Isaiah, anticipating the errand on which the King was about to send to him. Although the King had not yet communicated to the prophet the message of Sennacherib, the messenger of Isaiah brought the following letter:

"Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard.

"This is the word which the Lord hath spoken concerning him, and this is the reply that thou shalt send to him:

"The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn;

The daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed?

And against whom hast thou exalted thy voice,

And lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.

By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast said:

By the multitude of my chariots am I come up

To the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon;

And I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir trees thereof:

And I will enter into the height of his border, and his fruitful field.

I have digged, and drunk water;

And with the soles of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places.

“Now it is I, the Lord whom thou hast reproached, who have brought it to pass

That thou shouldst be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps. Therefore their inhabitants were of small power—they were dismayed and confounded:

They were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb,

As the grass on the house tops—and as corn blasted before it be grown up.

But I know thy proud sitting, and thy going out, and thy coming in, And thy rage against me.

Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears,

Therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, [as with a dromedary]

And I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

“Thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria.

And he shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow here,

Nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.

By the way that he came, by the same shall he return.”

By this remarkable and timely message Hezekiah's confidence was fully restored, and he commanded a scribe to copy out the defiance and threat which the prophet had written by divine inspiration, and sent it by the Assyrian messengers in reply to their master, who with all his forces was then resting, and holding a great feast, before Libnah.

On the evening when Sennacherib's messengers returned to the camp, the King had left the hall of the pavilion where he had been feasting in royal state with his officers and his Princes who were “altogether Kings,” and retired to his private apartment to contemplate his increased greatness; leaving his courtiers to indulge, to their content, in revelry and mirth unchecked by his restraining presence. When the King had read the poetic defiance received from Hezekiah, he laughed, and sent it open to Rabshakeh and his co-convivialists, with the message that he sent them something to add to their mirth, commanding that it should be handed to the Jester, to be read to them by him, with his commentaries thereon.

The Jester had just been mortifying, rather than amusing, the Assyrian generals, by cutting allusions to their clumsiness in war. He declared that while their Lord, the Great King, planned victories, and his soldiers, invincible through his presence, took armies captive, his smooth-fingered generals allowed the adverse Kings to escape. This matter had indeed been the subject of grave remark by Sennacherib himself, who deeply regretted the escape of Tirhakah, and gently but mournfully alluded to the previous escape of Merodach-Baladan from

the custody of Rabsaris, and of Eluleus while Tartan was blockading Tyre. Because Tirhakah was still at liberty, and might, possibly, at some future day raise another army if left to himself, Sennacherib now determined to seek him in Egypt, as soon as Jerusalem should be taken. As to Hezekiah, the King of Assyria charged his generals to use such vigilance that he, at least, should not escape them when his city was taken.

The effect of the poetic letter of Hezekiah was the same with Rabshakeh as it had been with his master. Laughing at its contents, he handed it to the Jester, bidding him read it aloud, and comment upon it, as the King had commanded. On glancing at it the Jester said :

“Our Lord, the Great King, is a god ; and to me this scroll is Hebrew. What is the character, brother Rab ?”

“To me also it is Hebrew ; yet you have heard the King’s command.”

“Then the King’s command be obeyed. Wonderfully to be obeyed is our Lord the Great King. Like the rest of the gods, what he commands, he gives the power to perform. I said but now that this scroll was all Hebrew to me. Now I am suddenly become learned ; and, although I never saw Greek before, I can now read this writing, which is a Greek song, or, rather, a song written in Greek. It is ‘The Song of the Dragon, the Eel, the Serpent, and the Roaring Lion,’ and I will give you a translation thereof. But, first :

Of Belib the Brave
Protection I crave.”

This implied that something might be said calculated to arouse the anger and resentment of some one present ; and all listened intently, as the Jester, professing to translate from the scroll, sang, accompanying his voice on the dulcimer :

“The Great King fought against the dragon Bel ;
Against the dragon Bel the King prevail’d,
Took him alive, and charged to guard him well,
Rab-eunuch. In his charge the eunuch fail’d :
The dragon touch’d the eunuch with his claw,
The eunuch loosed his hold, and Bel was seen no more.
“The Rab of this affair is
Rab-Rab-Rab-saris.”

All laughed but Rabsaris, who was flushed with anger. The Jester renewed the laughter by looking with a very grave countenance at the eunuch, producing upon his dulcimer a peculiar mocking cachinnation, and saying, “By the King’s command I translate this scroll. Now listen again :

“The Great King fought the monster Eel of Tyre—
Eluleus the big eel of the sea ;
The great King trap’d him in his Tyrian mire,
And bade his Tartan catch the Tyrian Eel ;
The Tartan stretch’d his hand forth, but the eel
Was nasty, slimy, slippery, and he
Let go the Eel—Eluleus was free !
“Now he who shirk’d his part then
Was noble Tar-Tartan.”

This time Rabsaris laughed with the others ; principally at the satisfactory discovery that he was not the solitary target of Tanixtoc's satire. But the Tartan, besides looking stormily towards the Jester, reached an empty golden goblet, as though contemplating its value as a missile. The Jester, however, without heeding the threat, made his dulcimer to echo mockingly the general laugh, and said, "By the King's command I translate this scroll. Now listen again :

"The great King fought the Serpent of the West,
And crush'd it. Then he bade his Cupman take
The bruise'd thing ; but, no braver than the rest,
He dared not touch the almost lifeless snake.
Such distant guard the timid Cupman kept,
That out of sight at night the Serpent slowly crept.
"Oh, a noble serpent-taker
Is Rab-Rab-Rab-shakeh !"

The storm-look was now transferred to the countenance of the great Rabshakeh, and the golden lightning flashed from his hand. His drinking cup was hurled at the head of the Jester. With equal quickness Tanixtoc caught the goblet in its passage, calmly placed it under his arm, and made the dulcimer laugh mockingly as before. The thunder which succeeded the flash was a peal of laughter, more boisterous than ever. "Thus," said the Jester, still retaining the golden cup under his arm, "I translate this scroll by command of the Great King. Now listen again :

"There's one Foe more, and only one, to take,
He's neither dragon, great sea eel, nor snake ;
But just a roaring, raging, tearing Lion ;
Who keeps his lair up on the Mount of Zion.
"Him next our lord the King will hunt ; but who
Shall keep this ramping, roaring, brute of might ?
Not Rabsaris, Rabshakeh, no, nor you—
Tartan ; his roar would put all three to flight.
But Tanixtoc alone shall grasp this Lion tight !"

Another dulcimer now struck up at the lower end of the pavilion, like the echo of the Jester's, and a voice sang briefly :

"Yes, Tanixtoc shall do that ;
Tan-Tanixtoc shall nurse the Hebrew Cat !"

The laughter this time was principally at the Jester's ironical description of Hezekiah, whose ensign was a rampant lion ; but whom the Assyrians had long scoffingly termed the "Housecat," because he would not come out of his stronghold and fight them.

"Thus," said the Jester, "have I translated this scroll by command of the Great King ; and now my commentary upon it is that the Grecian who wrote it, whoever he may be, is a rather clever and very knowing fellow."

Then taking the goblet from under his arm, the Jester contemplated it approvingly, and said :

"I thought, friend Tartan, that I detected thee at one time under a momentary inclination to be as generous as my brother Rab. Yet hardly so ; for in giving me the cup he hath given me his office also ; whereas thine office would not have gone with thy cup."

"Nay, indeed, Tanny; it is thine own office which would have gone had I sent thee my cup; for the gift would have transformed thee from a Jester into a leaking wine bottle, whose occupation is indeed gone. Therefore it was generosity, after all, that held back my hand."

Tanixtoc's dulcimer again gave forth the mocking cachinnation; after which the Jester extended the Hebrew scroll to Rabshakeh. He, however, looked sternly upon the Jester, and said: "Is the King's command to be disobeyed? You have not read the scroll."

"Brother Rab, spare your anger, and help me to obey the King's command. The last stanza of my translation amused you: let me sing it to you again, with a little correction. Listen:

"There's one Foe more, and only one, to take;
He's neither dragon, great sea eel, nor snake;
But just a roaring, raging, tearing Lion,
Who keeps his lair up on the Mount of Zion.
"Him next our lord the King will hunt; but who
Shall keep this ramping, roaring brute of might?
Not Rabsaris, nor Tartan. None but you,
O great Rabshakeh, shall prevent this Lion's flight!"

"I tell you, brother Rab, that the scroll is Hebrew to me, and I cannot translate it differently; unless, with the command, our Lord the King give me also still more help of knowledge."

"And I have told you, Jester, that to me also it is Hebrew; and therefore can I read it. Pass me the scroll, I will read it, and you shall obey the King by commenting upon it." Then Rabshakeh read:

"The Virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn.
The daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee."

"Hold there, Rab!" said the Jester. "Is it a virgin that our Lord the King is after, and not a roaring, raging, tearing, ramping lion? Then thou shalt not come near her, brother Rab. Rabsaris only shall take charge of this laughing, despising virgin, who hath two mothers. So she hath shaken her pretty head of a Jewess at the King! It is but a coy 'No.' The Eunuch shall take her, and teach her prettier behaviour to our Lord the King."

We refrain, however, from following the reading of Rabshakeh, and the ribald, blasphemous commentary of the Jester. The letter afforded some mirth to the Assyrian leaders; and after it was disposed of, the history and literature of the Hebrews continued the subjects of conversation and song among them. Rabshakeh gave several specimens of the amorous songs of Solomon, which kind of literature he well appreciated; and having related the details of the history and licentious habits of that King, furnished Tanixtoc, the King's poet and jester, with materials for one of his rapid lyrical compositions; which, later on, the Jester sang to the dulcimer. The last line of each stanza was accompanied by the full crash of the harps, tabors, and pipes of the royal festive band. The song was after the manner of the following, and was styled—

“THE COMPLAINT OF PHARAOH’S DAUGHTER.

“One ev’ning, when Solomon went to be sharer
Of the couch of the beautiful daughter of Pharaoh,
She, grieved at his ways, opportunity took,
For his naughty behaviour to bring him to book.
For although, in times past, ev’ry ev’ning he’d sought her,
He’d lately scarce call’d on her once in a quarter.

“Now, we know that the King had been very naughty
In neglecting the Daughter of Egypt so;
And he’d promised he would not, and ought not to—ought he—
Neglect the fair daughter of Egypt so?

“Said the Queen, ‘Now you know when you brought me from home,
That you promised your heart from *me* never should roam.
Yet, if I may credit the tales that I hear,
You’ve been falling in love at least twelve times a year!
And deceiving the women of Moab and Ammon,
Tyre, Sidon, and Edom with plausible gammon.’

“Now, we know it was true; and ’twas very naughty
For the King after all these strange women to go.
When he’d promised he would not, he ought not to—ought he—
After so many strange women to go?

“She continued, ‘When me you first cast your fond eye on,
You said I excelled all the daughters of Sion;
When you woo’d me, you vow’d all your life to adore me;
Yet ev’ry new moon you choose someone before me!
And each fresh one—compared to the love which you bore *her*—
Have persuaded you’d never loved any before her!’

“And twas likely he did; and ’twas very naughty,
Such slight to his beautiful consort to shew.
When he’d made such a promise, he ought not to—ought he—
Such slight to his beautiful consort to shew?

“She continued, ‘Dear Sol—if th’ old name don’t offend!—
Dearest Sol! on my knees I implore you to mend.
For if thus you continue these amorous freaks,
You will get a worse name than the Sol of the Greeks.
I implore you, towards me, your first love to soften;
And to visit the house that you built me more often!’

“But, after all this, he continued as naughty,
Till of wives he had taken a thousand or so.
And with all his rare wisdom he ought not to—ought—”

Silence!” shouted Rabshakeh, in a loud voice, as the harps, tabors, and pipes of the royal festive band were about to give accompanying crash to the last line: he had started, with others, to his feet, and was listening to strange sounds outside:

“To arms!” he shouted, the next moment: the voice of the King being also heard, and an indescribable scene of confusion and deafening uproar followed.

For the last few moments, while the Jester, intent upon his singing, had heeded nothing else, the attention of several of the Assyrian Princes, whose hearing was the keenest, had been drawn to a peculiar sound outside the pavilion. At first very faint, it grew louder with startling rapidity; like the swift approach of a thousand chariots; or the still more rapid influx of a rushing ocean. Taking it for a midnight attack of Tirhakah, with another army of Egyptians, the Assyrian generals started up, overturning each other in their unsteady haste.

A moment later their hearts were all seized with paralyzing terror. It was no human enemy : the roar was too unearthly, and mingled with loud thunder. It was the threatened Blast. It reached the pavilions, rent them, let in the dazing lightnings, and overthrew all before it with a terrific crash, before any but the King had escaped. Sennacherib had detected the approaching sound a little earlier than his drunken officers, and hastened out to ascertain its origin, just in time to escape the falling ruin. The thunderbolts hissed near the head of the King, and he was hurled to the earth with violence ; but he escaped death, that he might suffer humiliation.

Quick was the work of ruin of that terrible Blast ; which we, like the historians of antiquity, leave to the imagination of the reader, because words cannot describe so awful a visitation of Heaven upon the blasphemous and proud Assyrians.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE POOR OF JERUSALEM AND THE CHARITY OF TOBIAS.—IMMENSE SPOILS OF THE ASSYRIAN CAMP.—“HOW BEAUTIFUL UPON THE MOUNTAINS ARE THE FEET OF HIM THAT BRINGETH GOOD TIDINGS.”



IN the evening of the day when Sennacherib broke the power of the kingdoms of the Nile, the prophet Isaiah sent to the King of Judah a message, saying that the work which the Lord had appointed to the King of Assyria was accomplished; and that the Assyrians should no longer prevail, but become the spoil of the remnant that were left in Judah. He therefore advised Hezekiah to start early in the morning towards the camp of the Assyrians, before Libnah, with only his body-guard, and an unarmed army of the meanest of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to act as labourers and porters; and with all the beasts of burden and waggons that Jerusalem contained, to seize and bring away the riches of the Assyrians. As to the battle in which the Assyrians should be defeated, and their camp delivered into the hand of Hezekiah, the Lord alone would fight it, without the aid of human armies. Obedient to the injunctions of the prophet, the King of Judah started early in the morning after the defeat of Tirhakah; and, after resting awhile at noon, continued the journey until nearly midnight, when he reached the camp of the Assyrians. The Simoom and the thunder-bolts of Heaven had just completed their terrible work. The camp was a vast ruin. Sennacherib, and those who with him had survived the awful disaster, were flying in terror from the fatal spot. Among those who escaped were Belib the King of Babylon, and Tanixtoc the Jester. Rabshakeh, Rabsaris, and Tartan were slain in the ruins of the pavilion, and included in the hundred and eighty-five thousand of the “mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria,” who were left dead in the camp that night.

As it was dark, and the followers of Hezekiah, man and beast, were weary with the day's journey, they rested and waited for the light of the morning.

The non-combatant merchants who followed the army of Sennacherib to trade with the soldiers formed a great host of themselves; for with so much rich spoil constantly falling to the share of the soldiers, the

latter lived very luxuriously, and much to the profit of the trading camp-followers. These latter, of course, shared the well-founded panic of those who, by precipitate flight, escaped the Blast; and only those escaped who were unincumbered with their goods. Consequently the spoil which awaited seizure was enormous, and, as the prophet had intimated, it would require the labour of all the common people of Jerusalem, and all the beasts of burden and waggons which the city contained, to remove it in one journey. Besides the money, general merchandise, and material of war, it included in portable treasures, and works of art, some of the most rare of the spoils of a hundred cities. The fallen pavilions of the leaders and captains, who were Kings and Princes, covered costly vessels of gold and silver, sufficient for the furniture of many royal palaces. The provisions also, of course, fell into the hands of Hezekiah, making food suddenly superabundant in Libnah and Jerusalem.

Our translators of the brief scriptural account of this great judgment of Heaven upon the Assyrians have rendered it thus oddly:

“And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.”

Of course the Assyrians did not arise in the morning to find themselves all dead corpses. Those who survived the catastrophe, only survived by early flight from the scene, and all who had the temerity to await the issue of the battle waged by the avenging angel of the Lord, fell. Those who arose early in the morning, and found the Assyrian camp the silent camp of the dead, were the spoilers under Hezekiah.

The reader will by this time more clearly recognise the true origin of the story told by the Egyptians to Herodotus, in which they ascribed the part played by the Jewish King, to their own King, Setho the priest of Vulcan. The King who, without an army to oppose to the invaders, entered the temple and bewailed before the image—or the Cherubim of the Ark—the calamities he was in danger of suffering; who was encouraged by the God, and assured that he should suffer nothing disagreeable in meeting the Arabian army, for He would Himself send assistance to him—was Hezekiah. The deliverance ascribed to the instrumentality of the mice, was the deliverance of the miraculous blast.

We will now precede the return of Hezekiah, with his host of tradesmen, mechanics, and porters, laden with spoil to Jerusalem.

It should be mentioned here that although the stores of corn, wine, and oil contained in Jerusalem were enormous, having been deliberately provided in anticipation of a long siege, the price of food was so high that the distress among the poor had already been very great, and many had perished from privation. Jerusalem in its most flourishing times had its poor. They were often the theme of its prophets, who pleaded their cause, and commended them to the care of the fortunate and wealthy. Since the Assyrian invasion of Judea their condition was become abnormally unhappy. Not only had the owners of food

distributed their stores at almost famine prices, in anticipation of the siege of the capital, but the apprehension of famine also operated to stint the charity of those who would in ordinary times have willingly parted with a portion of their superfluous wealth. The wealthy knew not now how soon their riches might prove insufficient to procure for their own households the necessaries of life. All were familiar with the accounts of the heartrending sufferings of the inhabitants of Samaria a few years previously. They were familiar also with the history of the horrors of that former siege by Ben-Hadad, when an ass's head fetched eighty pieces of silver, and a quarter of a cob of dove's dung, from the manure stores, sold for five pieces of silver as an article of food, and when, not unfrequently, mothers boiled their infants, dead from starvation, for their own sustenance. The stronger the defences of the city the longer would the siege be protracted, and the greater the probability of the utmost sufferings of the inhabitants. These considerations of self-preservation had prevented the charity of the rich, and already, when Rabshakeh appeared before Jerusalem, its stoutest poor found it difficult to live, and many had perished for want of food. It might seem that, at such a time, all the male population of Jerusalem, including its poorest, would be valuable to the State, to bear arms in defence of the city; but the poor and feeble were crowded out of such service by the independent citizens and wealthy strangers, who were even too numerous all to find posts of service on the walls and in the forts, and who, indeed, had a greater interest in the defence in proportion that they had wealth at stake. It is true that those who applied personally to the King's treasurer received some small relief, small because of the ever-pressing prospect of famine; but thousands of the modest poor, including widows and young orphans, suffered and awaited death rather than beg, either of the King or their fellow-citizens. It was these whom Tobias soon discovered, to the advantage of many of them. For when he had sufficiently examined and admired the noble edifices and the best streets of the ancient capital, and its busy bazaars, he desired his friend Joseph to conduct him through the poor districts. The sufferings which he there witnessed touched deeply his compassionate heart, and from that hour he found constant occupation in distributing bread to the needy. He set no limit to his charity, and gave without stint or calculation, so long as he saw fellow-creatures suffering from hunger, and the power remained to him to afford relief. He heeded not the looming prospect of his own ultimate impoverishment. So his father had ever taught him by example, and he followed by natural inclination that example, rather than the prudent precepts of his mother, who in his hearing had so often raised objections to such lavish and, as she termed it, foolish generosity. Tobias's friend, the son of Abner, was not a hard-hearted man. He loved his species, believed the merciful teachings of the prophets in preference to the strict letter of the Mosaic law, and gave alms to the poor in studied proportion to his means. But even he expostulated with Tobias when he witnessed the extent of his alms, limited only by the fatigue of distribution. The young Benjamite

reasoned with his friend that the wealth of one person, though it included the recent magnificent present of a King, would, even if all expended in bread, afford but very temporary relief to a multitude; while he who so parted with his substance submitted himself to the great and terrible evil of perpetual poverty, with the near prospect of a famine and a miserable death, from which, notwithstanding the example of his own reckless generosity to others, he would probably find none willing to deliver him in his own need. To which the young Naphtalian would reply:

“Their hunger is a present loudly appealing fact; my own future want is but the unreal suggestion of fear and distrust. I am in the hands of my Father, who prompts me to feed His suffering people, and in Him will I trust to aid me when the famine pinches, rather than to my own prudence, or the mercy of man. Far rather would I become poor in goods, than harden my heart against the sufferings of my neighbours, and miss that riches of peace which is the reward of duty fulfilled.”

So Tobias continued to avert starvation from many poor families in Jerusalem, until he had expended not only the whole of the King's present, but a large proportion of the jewels which his father had bestowed upon him to defray the expenses of his journey. After the contrition and repentance of the people, and their subsequent reliance upon the promised salvation from the Assyrians, some of the poor fared better; for many of those who had means adopted the advice of the prophet, and fed the poor in place of afflicting their own bodies by mere ceremonious fasting.

Now suddenly the condition of all the inhabitants of Jerusalem was changed; the complete impoverishment of Tobias, through his generosity, was averted; and the poorest were enabled to keep long and jubilant feast. All the males of them who were strong enough had already gone forth with the King, to act as porters, in accordance with the directions of the prophet Isaiah.

Some hours before it was possible that tidings could have been received from Hezekiah, from the camp of the Assyrians, the southern walls and forts of Jerusalem were crowded with people watching for the arrival of messengers. At length, in the evening of the second day after the departure of the spoilers, the prophet Isaiah ascended one of the forts, and being under the influence of the divine afflatus, said in a loud voice:

“Awake! awake! put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for the enemy shall not enter thy gates. Shake thyself from the dust; arise O Jerusalem; for thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money.”

Then pausing and pointing towards the hilly horizon of the south, where the figure of a man appeared against the sky, he continued:

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

“Let the watchmen proclaim the salvation of Jerusalem. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places : for the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations ; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”

The prophet then disappeared ; and the people, with acclamations of joy, hastened out of the city to meet the messenger, who was running down the mountain towards the gate, followed by other runners who strove to be the first messengers from the camp of the Assyrians, of the wonderful events which had happened there, and of the approach of a part of the King's army of porters laden with food, and the other spoils of the enemy's camp.

The promises of the prophet were all exactly fulfilled. The deliverance of Jerusalem was completed, and was noised among all the nations. It is written in the Jewish Chronicles, “Thus the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other, and guided them on every side. And many brought gifts unto the Lord to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah : so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.”

CHAPTER XLVII.

SENNACHERIB'S PERSECUTION OF THE HEBREWS OF NINEVEH.—
TOBIT FLIES FROM HIS WRATH.—HIS DESPAIR IN EXILE.—HE IS
FOLLOWED BY HIS SON.



PERHAPS there never was so complete and sudden a reverse of fortune as that which befell Sennacherib before Libnah. Hitherto his successes had been unchecked, and his great victory over the Emperor of the West had left him the conqueror of the world, for there was no human power of resistance left. Yet within one hour he loses one hundred and eighty-five thousand of his choicest troops, and all who are left to him, affrighted at the great disaster, have entirely lost their courage. Instead of returning to his capital with a splendid triumphal entry, which should have eclipsed all previous pageants of the imperial city, and which he had confidently anticipated, with greater glory not only as King and Pontiff, but as a God, for such in his pride he had believed himself to be, he returned to his palace privately, in confusion and humiliation, baffled and enraged; his triumphs all wiped out, and his recent spoils of war, and even the equipments of his own army, left in the hands of a despised enemy whom his captains had derisively compared to a house cat. It was even a more complete and sudden humiliation than that of the modern Sennacherib, when he ignominiously, but of inexorable necessity, fled from the cold Blast of the North, leaving his armies its victims. Yet the King of Assyria refused to believe that his great calamity had been inflicted by the God of Israel. He declared that the God of Israel had so long shewn Himself powerless to save His people, and their strong cities, as well of the ten tribes as of Judah and Benjamin, that it was impossible He should ever be able to prevail against his own god Nisroch, who had made Assyria the mistress of all the world. The King confessed to himself that he had, in his pride, lately neglected the worship of this god of his fathers, and thus he accounted for his calamity and humiliation, and he now became a frequent, and somewhat humbled, worshipper at the shrine of which he, the King himself, was the Arch Priest. So far from fearing the God of Israel, he became, more than ever, the hater and persecutor of the Israelites in Nineveh, and slew many of them in a barbarous and tyrannical manner. In the degree that the glory of his high looks was now dimmed, and the pride of his stout heart brought down, his

hatred was intensified against that nation in whose presence, as it were, his punishment had been inflicted upon him ; and his bitterness was kindled against every Hebrew he saw whose mien shewed signs of happiness or self-respect ; and he caused them to be strangled, and their bodies cast into the market-places for hungry dogs to tear. Tobit was so daring as to remove some of these bodies during the night and bury them, these being his own words on the subject :

“ And if the king Sennacherib had slain any, when he was come and fled from Judea, I buried them privily (for in his wrath he killed many), but the bodies were not found when they were sought for of the king.”

The frequent disappearance of these bodies further enraged the King, and he caused a watch to be set ; and, having discovered the bold burier of the dead, ordered him to be seized and put to death. But there was one, friendly to the Purveyor, who heard this command, and hastened secretly to warn Tobit, before the officers had had time to seize him. Thanking Heaven and his friend for this warning, the Purveyor—whose occupation was now completely gone—immediately disguised and armed himself, took a purse of gold, and hurried out into his garden to escape by the back way, his wife walking with him to receive his last hurried instructions. She would have fled with him, but her strength was failing even before they reached the margin of the pool. When they reached it there was the gondola, moored at the same spot where eleven years ago it had first rocked and bowed to the Hebrew and his conductor, and thence conveyed him, for the first time, across to the island where the captive virgins sang and sported. Now it bears him for the last time. As it darted swiftly across the pool Anna again urged her husband to let her share his flight, although so enfeebled with terror that she had been unable to enter the gondola without help. Her husband replied that flight with him was impossible ; that he left her behind in charge of God, whose mercies to them would be equal to their distresses. He also told her in what direction he should fly and that he should watch the mountain road, and agreed upon a signal to be used by friends who might follow him with tidings either good or bad.

When they had gained the opposite bank Tobit had to lift his wife out of the gondola, so feeble did she remain ; and he was greatly embarrassed to leave her alone in that state with the night coming on. In fact he determined to risk his own life by waiting until she had recovered. Fortunately he had not to wait long. There was a generous young Hebrew, the chief of his servants, named Hamelech, who had expressed the desire to accompany Tobit in his flight, while hurriedly assisting him to disguise and arm. This his master had refused. But when Hamelech reflected that the household would now certainly be broken up, and that the condemned fugitive was no longer his master, he determined to take the responsibility of acting as his friend, and followed after him. By the time he reached the lake Tobit was half way across it in the gondola. Hamelech therefore took the circuitous way along its margin : but, being a swift runner, he came in sight of his master almost immediately after he had

lifted Anna, fainting, out of the boat. To him Tobit joyfully confided the care of his wife, and repeating to Hamelech his instructions respecting the secret signal, he hastened on his way towards the northern country.

After awhile Anna regained sufficient strength to proceed on the way towards the house by leaning upon the arm of Hamelech. She had declined to return in the gondola, preferring to leave it farthest from the pursuers, that they might not avail themselves of it as Tobit had just done. Meantime, a few minutes after Tobit's flight from the house, Sarchemenes, the captain of the King's household guards, arrived there, with several armed soldiers, to arrest the Purveyor; and they immediately dispersed themselves over the house and grounds with drawn swords and torches. It was not yet dark, but the searchers carried lighted torches because they would have to search in dusky places; and, besides, the darkness would soon be upon them. It was not supposed that the Purveyor could have been warned of the King's decree against him until this instant of the arrival of the guards, and there was no suspicion that he had had time or reason to escape from the grounds. After a few minutes Anna and her attendant perceived two torches approaching them, and guessed the signification.

"They will accost us," said Anna; "hinder them by cunning discourse. Let us appear calm and ignorant of impending evil; and appear to be taking a gentle evening walk for the air. You, Hamelech, must speak to them cunningly."

And when the two guards came near they enquired for the Purveyor, and Hamelech answered them that he had a short time since gone for a row upon the lake, and that they were even now going to the landing-place to look for his return. One of the guards, therefore, accompanied them, but the other proceeded to encompass the lake. The search being confined to the house and grounds, of course proved fruitless; and Sarchemenes had to return and report his ill success to the King. At this the King was so enraged that he immediately bereft the captain of his command, and banished him from his quarters until he should have arrested the Hebrew fugitive, and brought him to the King as a propitiatory sacrifice.

During these evil days Prince Esarhaddon had no influence with his father; and it was probable that even his friend Achiacharus would have been sacrificed had he not, by the advice of the Prince, hidden himself from the sight of the King. Therefore Tobit's household was immediately broken up, and all his goods confiscated, his wife being left in utter poverty; but Achiacharus secretly helped her.

Meantime Tobit safely effected his escape to the north country, where, avoiding the communities of outlaws as much as possible, he took up his solitary residence in a cave which looked down upon the high road from Nineveh to Armenia. In choosing solitude he exposed himself to additional dangers, both from man and beast; for many of the caves of that wild country were claimed by lions, bears and other savage animals. As to the outlaws, they were not worse on the average than the communities of the cities, many of them being

men who fled from tyranny, like Tobit himself, and the majority of them political refugees. But there are dishonest and dangerous men in all communities, and the Hebrew exposed himself to them more effectually in his solitude. At first he bore his misfortune with remarkable courage and hopefulness, although his position was in reality very desperate, and it was not possible to foresee any mode of escape from it. Being well armed he was able to defend himself from savage beasts; and food was to be had in abundance for money. But as the days rolled on—the slow, weary, monotonous days, hope grew fainter and fainter.

It was on the fifty-eighth day after that of his flight from home, while he was looking in the direction of Nineveh, that he saw four horsemen approaching along the Armenian road at a very great speed, and each rider led an extra horse for change and rest on the way. Naturally at first this sight alarmed the ex-Purveyor, but when he reflected he concluded that there was too much haste in this riding on the fifty-eighth day after his escape to lead him to fear that the errand of the riders was his own arrest; even should they be able to discover him. He watched from his elevated concealment, and when they drew near and passed below he recognised the two foremost riders as the Princes Adrammelech and Sharezer, although they were evidently disguised, and fled along the highway as if riding for their lives. He was so familiar with these Princes, at home and abroad, on foot and on horseback, that he felt sure he could not be deceived, and wondered greatly what could be the meaning of this adventure, especially as there were no pursuers visible.

Again long, weary, monotonous days rolled on, and hope grew yet fainter each day. It was about the seventieth day after his flight, late in the afternoon, that he sat upon his elevated rock surveying the wild and all too familiar scene which encompassed him; and, by habit, frequently looking towards Nineveh, no longer with hope, but in utter despair. He who had ever been so trustful and patient in all adversity, and had ever been in the habit of doing what appeared to him right, although it resulted only in losses and reproaches and discredit, now felt himself utterly God-forsaken. So weary was he of life that he earnestly wished he had not fled from the anger of Sennacherib, but had submitted to the decreed death; and so ended a comparatively happy and useful career, instead of thus commencing a new course of hopeless misery. Then he was intensely anxious about his deserted wife; for although Assyrian persecution was seldom extended to their captive women, he was now in a mood to fear the worst. He forgot now that in all his past experiences apparent evils had ever been turned to blessings. But he remembered with deep anguish how that proper and godly step which he had taken in sending his dear son to Jerusalem had resulted in his cruel condemnation to death on false evidence. He was dwelling now upon this most cruel of all his experiences, and it increased his present unhappy mood of hopelessness, and the assurance that he was God-forsaken.

We have become so used to the word "trials" as applied to human

woes, that we are apt to overlook the fact that the word means "sufferings that test virtue," and regard it only as synonymous with sufferings without any test of virtue or strength. The state of trial, or test of virtue by suffering, is the common condition of mankind. But it is very notable that the better the man or woman the more severe are the trials by which he or she is assailed. Perhaps the trial is mercifully meted out according to the strength of the probationer. Tobit is an example of a good man very sorely tried. He was a great lover of his native country, but was carried captive to a strange land: he was very loyal, but was subject to, and cruelly oppressed by, a foreign tyrant: he was remarkably religious, and loved to worship at the Temple, but he was carried far from it into the land of the heathen: he was a most affectionate and indulgent husband, but his wife had turned out to be an almost perpetual scold: he was also a most loving father, and had a loving son, but he mourned the death of this only child: he was always a most liberal and benevolent man, and a true warm friend, but he is reduced to poverty and friendlessness: he is a great admirer of nature in all its phases and moods, and also of art, and is about to become blind. Surely he is a man of many trials. Generally he has not been found wanting in courage and patience; but just now he feels faint and God-forsaken; and that is the greatest trial of all.

At length the unhappy Hebrew saw approaching, in the far off distance, along the road from Nineveh, a chariot occupied by three soldiers, and drawn by a pair of horses. They were evidently Assyrians, and it was a bold thing for so small a party to venture into that country. They were Sarchemenes and two of his bold guards, in search of Tobit, and this was the seventieth day of their search. The ex-Captain's position seemed to be full as hopeless as Tobit's, for all this time the pursuer had not obtained a single clue to the whereabouts of his missing man. But he and his guards knew no fear. In fact they rejoiced in danger. And until he could recover the fugitive he was an exile; so he persevered in his search. But Tobit knew nothing of this, although, as he watched the approaching group, he regarded them as foes; especially when, as they drew near, he recognised the Captain of the household guard, with whom he had been on intimate terms for many years, but who had lately been largely employed by the King as the instrument of his vengeance against the Hebrews. Tobit happening to look again towards Nineveh, behold, there appeared another chariot approaching in the far distance, occupied by two soldiers—as the ex-Purveyor made out by the flashing of their helmets—and a civilian. Next his eye rested upon the carcass of a great bear, lying upon the rock below where he stood, which he himself had slain yesterday in a desperate conflict; and now, with the prospect of another immediate encounter with a still more dangerous foe, his courage and faith returned to him, and he roused himself, saying: "How can I deem myself God-forsaken when I have been so wonderfully delivered from the wrath of Sennacherib; and from his swift pursuers, and from a thousand unknown dangers during all these seventy days of terror; and again, only a few

hours since, from the grip of a powerful bear." Just then was heard the startling loud roar of a great lion—unseen, but evidently great, from the loudness of its thunder, which echoed among the rocks; and the roar was repeated again and again, as though the fierce creature replied defiantly to the echo of its own voice. At this welcome sound Sarchemenes stopped his chariot below, and, alighting from it, began to climb the rocks with his sword drawn. The lion had probably been attracted to the spot by the scent of the blood of the bear, which had formed a pool in the hollow of the rock below—considerably below the spot occupied by the Hebrew as a watch-tower. The Assyrian advanced boldly with the eager excitement of the fearless sportsman, the danger adding a perfect charm to the enterprise. After a brief lull, during which the Assyrian was climbing up towards the carcass of the bear, from which direction the voice of the lion had proceeded, the roarings recommenced with increased energy, and became perfectly bewildering to the hunter; for the echoes, in the midst of which Sarchemenes now found himself, made the exact position of the lion quite uncertain. The Hebrew saw all from above: he saw the momentary bewilderment of the Assyrian, and the actual advance of the huge lion from a quarter against which the soldier was not at that instant on his guard. Although Sarchemenes must be regarded as quite as much the hunter of the Hebrew as of the lion, Tobit in his humanity could not restrain a cry of warning. But, although not so intended, if that cry of warning had any influence at all, it was to seal the fate of Sarchemenes. He looked upward instead of behind, and the lion was instantly upon him, seizing him in his huge jaws by the neck, which it broke, and the great beast carried off his prey, as lightly as a hound would carry a hare.

Now from the moment that Sarchemenes left his chariot to ascend the rocks, a dim recollection seemed to arise in the mind of Tobit of a similar situation in which he had once before, long ago, been placed. But how could that be? He had never before had to fly from his home and hide himself in a rocky country. Yet he could not get rid of the feeling that his present position was an exact repetition of one that he had been placed in before, years ago. He seemed to remember not only the exilement and the rocks and his hiding, but even the flashing of the helmet of the soldier as he climbed towards the hiding-place. And this impression was the result of the dream that he had dreamt many years ago, on the evening preceding his exaltation by King Shalmanezar. He had dreamt that he had been on intimate terms with Pharaoh, and had entertained him at his house, and the scene "changed and he found himself an outlaw in a desolate place, all alone, hiding from pursuers who sought his life. His wretched lurking-place was a comfortless cavern, high up in the side of a precipice, a place of refuge from all men, for all men had become his foes." In that dream he seemed to have hidden there a long time, and become familiar with misery; and he had just recently been sharing the same wretched sensations. But he could not now bring to mind the circumstance of that dream, and he shuddered at the mysterious sensations. Only for a few seconds, however, for they

soon gave place to other overwhelming feelings. While the last-named tragedy was being acted the second chariot was rapidly approaching, and to the joy and astonishment of the exile he could now make out the signal which he had appointed to be exhibited by friendly searchers, namely, a red rosette on the head, either of horse or man. But when the chariot approached still nearer, so that he could see the countenances of the occupants, he felt that he must now surely be dreaming. Yet would he now rather that his present position, with all its bitterness, should prove real than that he should presently awake and find himself in his bed in his old home near the King's palace; for what he saw in that chariot was more precious to him than all the world beside. Yet it could not be true; and he dreaded the awaking. When we have bad dreams, accompanied with a half-consciousness that they are only dreams after all, we try to arouse ourselves from the painful imaginings. But now the ex-Purveyor was actually afraid that the rapid beating of his heart would awake him from this happiness. How could he be other than dreaming, when he beheld in that chariot, drawn by the red-rosetted horses, his own dear dead son Tobias, also with a red rosette in his head-gear? Man and manly as he was he began to feel giddy and faint; but he struggled against himself; and with his heart emboldened against its own weakness, he shouted his son's name, and began to descend to the highway.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE MURDER OF SENNACHERIB, AND RETURN OF THE EX-PURVEYOR TO NINEVEH, WHERE HE BECOMES BLIND.—THE SORROW OF SARA IN ECBATANA.



ON the fifty-fifth day after that on which King Sennacherib had decreed the death of the Purveyor, the higher decree of the King's own death, which had been pronounced by the prophet Isaiah, was executed upon him by his own sons Adrammelech and Sharezer. They were very wicked Princes, and it was permitted that they should be the odious instruments of execution against their own father, who had himself been a most terrible instrument of the punishment of wicked nations. And to prove to all observers how vain was his reliance upon the god to whom he attributed all his successes, he was permitted to be slain at the very shrine of Nisroch, while worshipping there, even he who was the Arch Priest of that false deity. And this is the prophet's own conclusion to his history of these events :

"So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt in Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword ; and they escaped into the land of Armenia : and Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead."

The ex-Purveyor's account of this event is in strict accordance with the above. After referring to his own condemnation and flight he says :

"And there passed not five and fifty days before two of his sons killed him, and they fled into the mountains of Ararath, and Sarchedonus his son reigned in his stead ; who appointed over his father's accounts, and over all his affairs, Achiacharus my brother Annael's son. And Achiacharus intreating for me, I returned to Nineve : now Achiacharus was cup-bearer and keeper of the signet, and steward and overseer of the accounts : and Sarchedonus appointed him next unto him : and he was my brother's son."

Sarchedonus was another name for Esar-haddon. Three days after the death of Sennacherib, Tobias arrived from the Holy Land, to find his father an outlaw, and his mother reduced to poverty ; everything belonging to them having been confiscated. But, already, Achiacharus his cousin had emerged from the retirement which the dread of Sennacherib had imposed upon him, and was exalted by the new King, the loving companion of his youth. So it was not difficult to obtain the King's pardon for the ex-Purveyor, and to employ the magic of the royal signet to seek him and to bring him back. But when he was returned, the Keeper of the Signet did not succeed in obtaining his uncle's restoration to office, nor the restitution of his

confiscated property. For the young King could feel no great favour for one who had braved the anger of his murdered father, whose memory this youngest son affectionately revered. So the ex-Purveyor and his family for a considerable time subsisted upon a pension cheerfully awarded from the private purse of the Cup-bearer. And now for awhile there were comparatively halcyon days ; for the restoration of Tobias was the restoration of happiness to his loving father. Yet his sky was not free from clouds. So long as her husband was in great trouble and danger, Anna would rally to him with show of affectionate support. In the hour of great trouble she would act the comforter. But in times of external calm she would be the constant disturber of the internal peace. Although the ex-Purveyor's income was now comparatively small, he persisted in still indulging in his old habits of charity. But he took care to extend his limited help only to the deserving poor of his own nation, for there were many more of them than he had the means to relieve. This, as of old, was the cause of continual protest and annoyance on the part of his wife—a persistent annoyance such as none but a very patient, chivalrous man could have endured. So, even after his great deliverance from exile, and from his mourning for his dear son, he still had a great trial ever with him. And the constant impudent scoldings of a wife, who knows that she can rely upon a man's chivalrous forbearance for impunity, is a very great trial ; because he cannot very well withdraw himself from, or remove from himself, that domestic din, which, in its constant repetition, is more and more painful to endure. In this respect he is almost as badly off as the miserable dog to whose tail some wicked urchin has tied a dinning kettle. Only there is this difference in favour of the unhappy cur : If he will lie still, his kettle will be silent ; while the scolding wife in the same case is the most noisy. Still, the ex-Purveyor was too manly to allow his wife, by her clamour, to intimidate him from doing what he considered his duty.

Thus it happened one day, in the summer month of Sivan, at the Feast of Pentecost, or Thanksgiving for the First Harvest, that the ex-Purveyor was about to sit down to a good dinner with his family ; when, seeing that there was an abundant provision, he sent his son to seek in the Market-place which was near by, some poor godly man to share the dinner. But Tobias, finding there the body of one of their nation, which had been strangled, and cast out for public insult, hastened back to tell his father what he had seen ; and he immediately arose from the table, without having touched any food, and had the body conveyed into his house. Then, for sorrow, he would not touch any food until sundown, remembering the prophecy of Amos : “Your feasts shall be turned into mourning, and all your mirth into lamentation.” But at sundown he washed, and ate his dinner in sadness. Then he and his son made a grave, and buried the dead. It will thus be seen that violence against the Hebrews did not cease with the death of Sennacherib, and the life of an obscure person of that nation was still counted of little value. In those days it always happened that after the return of armies from a great war, human life, chastity, and property were, for a long time, less safe than usual,

through the demoralizing effect of frequent massacres of conquered peoples, and the pillage of captured cities.

Being polluted with handling the dead, and the summer night being very warm, the ex-Purveyor slept out in the open air, and that night he caught a disorder in his eyes, which resulted in total blindness. Here was another great trial. But this was not all:

It happened that Achiacharus the King's favourite was, like his uncle, a very generous man; and he had a young friend named Aman, an Ammonite, a man of very amiable, polished, and agreeable manners. This friend, who was a very entertaining and witty companion, and of courtly bearing, the Cup-bearer introduced to the King, who also conceived a great partiality to him, to the joy of Achiacharus. But Aman was very envious and treacherous by nature: although he had contrived completely to conceal those evil qualities all the years that Achiacharus had been his great benefactor, having raised him from utter poverty and obscurity. And he still managed to conceal his real nature so completely, that while he was cunningly planning the downfall of his friend, by gradually sowing distrust of him in the mind of the King, he all the time won credit both from the King and the Cup-bearer, for most friendly generosity toward the latter. In the end, or, rather, the end of the chapter, for things were righted in the end, the fall of Achiacharus was accomplished, and Aman succeeded him in his offices, and in the King's favour, a few months after the ex-Purveyor had lost his sight. Then the pension ceased when it was most of all needed; Tobit, in his blindness, being utterly unable to do anything for the support of his family; and his son, by a hard fatality, failed in every attempt to obtain remunerative occupation.

And now, when it was seen that the ex-Purveyor was afflicted simultaneously with blindness and poverty—he whose long-continued prosperity, happiness, and high station, had been the envy of all the envious—his quondam friends, whom he had benefitted so much and served so faithfully in his days of power, turned against him, and declared that he was suffering a divine visitation in punishment of some secret sin; and they judged that sin to be hypocrisy, since they could detect nothing wrong in his visible actions, nor conceive any other imputation. They charged him not only with hypocrisy in his religious observances, but also in his charities, which they declared had been ever acts of pride for praise and ostentation.

For the sake of economy the blind Hebrew and his family now removed from the grand part of the city to a poor quarter called Elymais, chiefly inhabited by poor workpeople, where living was cheaper. For ancient Nineveh, with all its wealth and magnificence, had its poor quarters and its struggling poor, as well as the modern Nineveh; where the lowly toiled for the rich. And this quarter was called Elymais in derision, after the great and exceedingly wealthy city of Elymais in neighbouring Elam, or Persia. And there, to his intense mortification, his wife had to take in needlework to add to the very scanty earnings of Tobias, who seemed to be under an evil spell in his search for work. And this necessary labour of Anna was not only most painful to her helpless husband, but it was equally a

mortification to herself, who had so long been a great lady at the head of a large household, that she had altogether forgotten her humbler antecedents, and now became irritable and impatient at the adverse change in her circumstances. One day she received abundant cause for irritability, and retaliated with cruelty. The circumstances which we are about to relate prove that all Tobit's many years' knowledge of his wife's character had not established that faith in her perfect honesty which ought to have existed in his mind. As we are about to witness a most deplorable little domestic scene, it ought to be mentioned here that it had been Tobit's life-long custom always to avoid a quarrel; and although his wife was often quarrelsome he never indulged her in that pastime by taking the necessary second part in it, but left it all to her; his replies, when he replied at all, being always gentle. But in this instance he was altogether to blame, and brought down upon himself the anger of his wife by an unhappy and most exasperating mistake. And these are his own words on the subject, recorded in the immortal Hebrew writings:

"And my wife Anna did take women's work to do. And when she had sent them home to the owners, they paid her wages, and gave her also besides a kid. And when it was in my house, and began to cry, I said unto her, From whence is this kid? is it not stolen? render it to the owners, for it is not lawful to eat anything that is stolen. But she replied upon me, It was given for a gift more than the wages. Howbeit, I did not believe her, but bade her render it to the owners: and I was abashed at her. But she replied upon me, Where are thine alms, and thy righteous deeds? behold, thou and all thy works are known."

These words from his own wife were very cutting; and quite as cruel as his own suspicion of her honesty. It had been hard enough to know that false friends had expressed the view of all his past life contained in these few words; but the home condemnation was terrible. He forgot at the moment that his son believed in him, and had done all he could to comfort him for the loss of friends; and had reminded him of the trials and ultimate justification and prosperity of his predecessor Job. In his great grief he thought nothing now of ultimate justification, or renewed prosperity, but prayed that he might die, and wept bitter tears through his blind eyes. And these are some of the words of his prayer:

"Deal with me as seemeth best unto Thee, and command my spirit to be taken from me, that I may be dissolved, and become earth; for it is profitable for me to die rather than to live, because I have heard false reproaches, and have much sorrow: command therefore that I may now be delivered out of this distress, and go into the everlasting place: turn not Thy face away from me."

It has been already seen that Anna was one of those wives who can never entertain any reverence whatever for their husbands under any circumstances. Some of the greatest men of every age, and in every department of greatness, have been afflicted with such partners; who reward love and exaltation with personal contempt. Anna objected to her husband's charities, had no faith in his faith, and was

in a chronic state of dissatisfaction with him on account of qualities generally which would have exalted and ennobled him in the minds of good and wise women—the good angels of human life. His remarkable gentleness she treated as submissive weakness, and despised him for it; whereas, had she been a wise and discerning woman, she would have perceived that his character combined this most gentle chivalrousness with the boldness and courage of the lion and the firmness of the rock. But she had habituated herself to the belief that the courage and boldness were all her own; and thereby constantly assailed him with her ill-temper, because of the impunity insured by that same forbearing gentleness. It was the same with the social elevation which he had obtained for her. She gave him no particle of credit, thanks, or respect for that; but, curiously enough, rather despised him the more in consequence. For she felt herself a greater lady than ever as wife of the King's favoured Purveyor, and the mistress of a great household, yet felt not greater by the reflection of his greatness, but all of her own. In fact she was one of those wives in whose minds familiarity begets contempt; although had that familiarity been with masculine sternness, instead of masculine gentleness, it might have been otherwise. But although there are too many such wives, low by nature, if not by birth also, who become false, pretentious and tyrannous when raised by their husbands to that which is to them a false and unnatural elevation, these are, after all, only the unwomanly among women.

When he had thus prayed, and wished and hoped for death, and was pondering on his wretched worldly condition, with regret that he had nothing to leave to his only child but an inheritance of poverty and captivity, it suddenly flashed upon his memory that he was, after all, the possessor of some wealth which he had, strangely, forgotten all about. He remembered that some years previously, in the days of his prosperity, he had deposited the considerable sum of ten talents of silver with his trusty friend Gabael in Rages of Media. It was a curious circumstance that this money had been entirely forgotten by him until this most bitter of all the bitter hours of his life. Then he called to him his son, to say what he expected would be his last farewell words to him: and his chivalrousness towards his wife, whom he had so cruelly wronged by his suspicion, was the first sentiment to find expression, thus:

“My son, when I am dead bury me, and despise not thy mother, but honour her all the days of thy life, and do that which shall please her, and grieve her not. . . . And when she is dead bury her by me in one grave.”

From his following advice to his son respecting almsgiving, it is clear that, however cruelly he had himself been misjudged, and however much he had suffered from ingratitude and poverty, he would have given again as freely as ever, had he to go through life again, even with all his bitter experiences:

“Give alms of thy substance: and when thou givest alms, let not thine eye be envious, neither turn thy face from any poor, and the face of God shall not be turned away from thee. If thou hast

abundance, give alms accordingly: if thou hast but a little, be not afraid to give according to that little. For thou layest up a good treasure for thyself against the day of necessity. Because that alms do deliver from death, and suffereth not to come into darkness. For alms is a good gift unto all that give it, in the sight of the Most High. But give nothing to the wicked."

These words of faith and trust, in the midst of bitter trial, need no comment. After much more advice as to the avoidance of follies and deadly sins, which seemed hardly necessary to such a son, the father informed him of the ten talents of silver which he had left in the hands of Gabael at Rages in Media, to be kept against a day of adversity, and the receipt for which, although forgotten, had fortunately been preserved from the general wreck of fortune.

Now while this was taking place in Nineveh, Sara was in great trouble at Ecbatana. She also had gone through many trials, and seven lovers, altogether, had by this time been—encouraged by Edna—sacrificed to the guardian jealousy of Asmodeus, who had destroyed them all.

And just at this time, even while Anna was retaliating upon her husband, with the result which we have seen, Sara was being driven to a similar despair by taunts as cruel and charges as baseless. It happened that she found occasion to reprimand some of her father's servants for some fault which they would not admit, and in retaliation they turned upon her and charged her to her face with having with her own hands strangled the young men to whom her father had given her as a wife, one after the other. This, and other spiteful things which they said, so shocked her, that anger gave place to intense grief; and the recollection thus thrust upon her, that so many young men had been sacrificed on her account, aroused in her mind a horror more intense than she had ever experienced before. And to be regarded as their murderess, and openly charged with having herself strangled them, added overwhelming confusion to her feelings. Too wounded to reply, she retired to the privacy of her chamber in a frenzy of despair and weariness of her young life, that made death welcome and desirable to her. And while the ex-Purveyor was praying that he, because he had heard bitter false reproaches and had much sorrow, might be permitted to "go into the everlasting place," she also, in a similar state of mind was praying thus: "Take me out of the earth, that I may hear no more the reproach. . . . But if it please not Thee that I should die, command some regard to be had of me, and pity taken of me, that I hear no more reproach." And it is further recorded:

"So the prayers of them both were heard before the majesty of the great God. And Raphael was sent to heal them both, that is, to scale away the whiteness of Tobit's eyes, and to give Sara the daughter of Raguel for a wife to Tobias the son of Tobit; and to bind Asmodeus the evil spirit, because she belonged to Tobias by right of inheritance. The self-same time came Tobit home, and entered into his house, and Sara the daughter of Raguel came down from her upper chamber."

CHAPTER XLIX.

TOBIAS TRAVELS TO ECBATANA WITH A GUIDE, AND STOPS AT THE HOUSE OF RAGUEL.



HE ex-Purveyor having informed his son that he wished him to go at once into Media to reclaim the ten talents of silver, Tobias was greatly rejoiced, feeling a strong presentiment of approaching happiness, and asked how he could receive the money, seeing that he and Gabael were unknown to each other. Upon which his father directed him where to find the receipt, which was also a document payable to order, and desired him to obtain some trusty companion, of their own nation, who knew the way, to accompany him for wages. Then Tobias went out, and had not gone many yards when he met a handsome young Hebrew, a stranger to him, but of very prepossessing appearance; so that Tobias felt drawn towards him, and approached and told his errand. The young man at once offered himself for the situation of companion and guide, stating that he knew the way well, and was even personally acquainted with Gabael, at whose house he had once been entertained.

Tobias hastened back to tell his father of the remarkable and speedy success of his errand, the stranger accompanying him. Then said the father:

“Call him unto me, that I may know of what tribe he is, and whether he be a trusty man to go with thee.”

Then he came before the blind Hebrew, who interrogated him, and he replied:

“Dost thou seek for a tribe or family, or a hired man to go with thy son?”

But the enquiry still being urged, he replied: “I am Azarias, the son of Ananias the Great, and of thy brethren.”

“Thou art welcome, brother, be not angry with me, because I have enquired to know thy tribe and thy family, for thou art, my brother, of an honest and good stock: for I know Ananias and Jonathas, sons of that great Samaias: as we went together to Jerusalem to worship, and offered the first-born, and the tenths of the fruits, and they were not seduced with the error of our brethren: my brother thou art of a good stock. But tell me, what wages shall I give thee? wilt thou

accept a drachm a day, and things necessary the same as to my own son? Yea, moreover, if ye return safe, I will add something to thy wages."

These terms being accepted, and all parties well pleased, except Anna, they prepared for the journey. And when they were starting the next morning the blind Hebrew blessed them, saying:

"God, which dwelleth in heaven, prosper your journey, and the angel of God keep you company. And mayest thou Azarias, be unto my son according to the signification of thy happy name—*the assistance of the Lord*." And the ancient writing continues:

"So they went forth both, and the young man's dog with them."

But Anna, who passionately loved her only child, so recently restored to her as from the grave, was inconsolable at his departure, and thought nothing of the so-much-needed money in comparison to the imagined dangers of the journey; and, weeping bitterly, she said to her husband, in oft-broken sentences:

"Why hast thou sent away our son? is he not the staff of our hand, in going in and out before us? Be not greedy to add money to money: but let it be as refuse in respect of our child. For that which the Lord hath given us to live with, doth suffice us."

The strong affection here is very apparent; so also is the inconsistency of the reproach about being greedy to add money to money, when the chief outcry of her life against her husband had been that he was ever too liberal in relieving the wants of the poor, instead of adding money to money as she would have had him. He mildly replied to her with steady confidence and perfect faith:

"Take no care; he shall return in safety, and thine eyes shall see him. For the good angel will keep him company, and his journey shall be prosperous, and he shall return safe."

These words were spoken with so much assurance, that they sounded completely prophetic, and carried conviction to the mind of Anna, although as a rule she attached so little importance to her husband's words. She thought also of his wonderful deliverance during the late troubled times in the holy land, and his return thence, and she gave over weeping.

And now the ex-Purveyor had changed his mind about going at once into the everlasting place, and he prayed, instead, that he might be spared to welcome back his dear son with the ten talents of silver. So it is often well that the most earnest, but erring, prayers prove ineffectual.

At the end of the first day's journey the travellers still found themselves on the banks of the meandering Tigris, and took lodging at a house there. In the morning Tobias bathed in that river, and just as he was leaving the water a great fish, the dangerous silurus, made speed towards him, and, in the energy of its pursuit, leaped out of the water on to the bank to attack him. This was a most remarkable feat for a silurus, the habit of that family of fishes being very sluggish, and their habitat the muddy bottoms of large rivers, and not the banks. But it often happens, as in this instance, that creatures of sluggish habits, when once aroused, especially in attacking their prey, are capable of a

great concentration of energy for a short period. Seeing the great fish in pursuit of the retiring bather, the guide shouted to him, and he escaped the great gaping mouth with its triple rows of terrible teeth. The guide then directed him to kill the fish with his staff, and to take out the heart and liver and dry them, and carefully preserve them; and also to take out its gall, and carefully preserve that also in a bottle, as they would hereafter have important need of these things. As to the gall of the silurus it was greatly esteemed and used by the physicians as a specific cure for distempers of the eyes. Some of the flesh of the fish they roasted for breakfast, and all, including the dog, and the family of their host, made an abundant feast of it.

As they were continuing their journey that morning, Tobias said:

"Brother Azarias, to what use is the heart, and the liver, and the gall of the fish?" And he replied:

"Touching the heart and the liver, if a devil, or an evil spirit trouble any, we must make a smoke thereof before the man or the woman, and the party shall be no more vexed. As for the gall, it is good to anoint a man that hath whiteness in his eyes, and he shall be healed."

It will be seen that this guide, already, instead of adopting the humility of the paid servant, gave orders to Tobias, who unquestioningly obeyed him; for his influence was irresistible, and he was become the Mentor to this Telemachus. And here also we see foreshadowings of happy events; or, more correctly, gleams of light like the saffron rays of the dawn of happy day.

In due time, after several adventureless days, the travellers reached the summit of a hill from which they obtained a view of distant Ecbatana, through which city they would have to pass on the way to Rages; and then the guide began to speak amazing words to Tobias. Of course the mind of the latter had been ever full of the subject of his dearly beloved cousin, respecting whose whereabouts he purposed making enquiry of every Hebrew captive whom he might meet with in Media, until he had succeeded in his quest. Yet, curiously enough, the subject of his love had never once been mentioned to his guide during all these days of companionship. But now the guide himself opened up the subject, and we can imagine the amazement of the young lover when Azarias said to him, as they approached the capital of Media:

"Brother, to-day we shall lodge with Raguel, who is thy cousin; he also hath one only daughter, named Sara; I will speak for her, that she may be given thee for a wife. For to thee doth the right of her appertain, seeing thou only art of her kindred. And the maid is fair and wise: now therefore hear me, and I will speak to her father; and when we return from Rages, we will celebrate the marriage: for I know that Raguel cannot marry her to another, according to the law of Moses, but he shall be guilty of death, because the right of inheritance doth rather appertain to thee than to any other."

These words rejoiced the young lover exceedingly, but he sought to dissemble his ecstasy. Since his return from Jerusalem he had heard how his cousin had been persecuted by lovers, and how she had been delivered from them all by an evil genie who was himself

jealous of her. Now Tobias became anxious to elicit the opinion of his Mentor as to his own chance of deliverance from the same danger. After some conversation on the subject, during which Tobias dreaded that after all he might be only in the midst of a blissful dream, his guide spoke again in his irresistible manner, as if with the authority of an inspired prophet, reminding his hearer of the manner of Isaiah, and said :

“O my brother, make no reckoning of the evil spirit ; for this same night shall she be given thee in marriage. And when thou shalt come into the marriage chamber, thou shalt take the ashes of perfume, and shalt lay upon them some of the heart and liver of the fish, and shalt make a smoke with it : and the devil shall smell it, and flee away, and never again come any more : but when thou shalt come to her, rise up both of you, and pray to God which is merciful, who will have pity on you, and save you : fear not, for she is appointed unto thee from the beginning ; and thou shalt preserve her, and she shall go with thee.”

The young lover gazed into the face of his guide in joyful amazement at such promises ; and, wonderful as was this sudden happiness promised, he had now no doubt of its realization. He could not look into that countenance and doubt its truth and authority, although he could not conceive why such should be its influence.

When they reached Ecbatana the guide led Tobias straight to the house of Raguel ; and the first to meet them by accident was Sara, who immediately recognised Tobias as her lover whom she had seen in her dream. On both sides there was suppressed emotion and unexpressed joy. Sara, as soon as she had introduced the strangers to her father, flew away to her chamber to weep for joy, such joy as she had never before felt ; and now her despair was conquered by a powerful presentiment of perfect happiness to come. When she had somewhat calmed her fiercely beating heart she came down again and rejoined her mother. Meantime Raguel had given his travelling fellow-countrymen a hearty welcome to rest and refreshment on their way. At first he did not recognise either of them, and they made no haste to discover themselves to him. But after awhile, when salutations and compliments had been paid, and Raguel had introduced them to his wife, he observed to her how much the younger of the two resembled his cousin Tobit of Nineveh, and at the same time asked them of what tribe they were, and of what city in their captivity. To which when they had replied that they were of the tribe of Naphtali, and captives of Nineveh, not yet discovering to them that they were his old acquaintances, he further asked :

“Do ye know Tobit our kinsman ?” And they said, “We know him.” Then said he, “Is he in good health ?” And they said, “He is in good health.” And Tobias added : “He is my father.” Then Raguel gazed upon him with astonishment and delight, and starting up embraced and kissed him with much emotion. But Tobias added that his father had totally lost his sight, and then the joy was mingled with sorrow, and there was weeping among them. But the tears of Sara were, after all, not so much of sorrow at this sad news, as of her

heart's general overflow of joy at hearing the young visitor's avowal of his parentage, in which she had so great an interest.

Then Raguel blessed his young visitor, and said :

"Thou art the son of an honest and good man : may the God of thy father bless thee with addition to his prosperity and good report. Follow in his steps, and thou shalt tread paths of pleasantness and honour."

Alas, how often are the steps of the just, generous, and dutiful in thorny paths of disappointment and sorrow, paths dishonoured, yet never paths of dishonour.

Then the guide made himself known as Azarias, and there was much cordial greeting and rejoicing ; and Raguel ordered a ram of the flock to be slain, and a feast prepared, and Sara assisted her mother in directing the servants, and in making the necessary preparations.

Now Raguel, after all his bitter experience of the effects of his daughter's beauty upon the hearts of young men, gave Edna a hint to keep Sara from the presence of Tobias, as his daughter did not seem to be availing herself of the privilege which she had obtained, of retiring to her chamber when young men had occasion to visit her father. But this hint did not please Edna. One who had encouraged her daughter's seventh suitor might be expected, as naturally, to favour even an eighth ; and she felt greatly interested in Tobias. Hitherto her daughter had required no hint to absent herself from her father's guests when there was any possibility that her presence might give rise to the persecutions of a fresh suitor, and a consequent fresh sacrifice to the dreaded Asmodeus. But now Sara felt assured that her deliverance was at hand, and had no motive to hide herself from her dearly beloved cousin, whom she had mourned as dead, and to whose dear memory she had devoted, inviolate, her widowed heart. And Edna was so charmed with her husband's young relative that she felt as eager as she had ever been in previous instances, to bring about once more the betrothal of her daughter. So, instead of complying with her husband's hint, she took the opposite course ; and while the preparations for the feast were proceeding, she gossipped with her daughter about Tobias, marriage, and love ; and, for the first time in her life the mother's love-talk was pleasing and acceptable to Sara.

Meantime, Raguel and his guests being alone together, Tobias said to his guide :

"Brother Azarias, speak of those things of which thou did'st talk in the way, and let this business be despatched."

So the guide introduced the subject of the marriage, which when Raguel heard he was sad, and exclaimed :

"Alas, Azarias, hast thou forgotten the sad end of all my daughter's lovers that thou should'st propose as another victim the only son of my dear cousin? Surely thou hast forgotten the jealousy of Asmodeus."

"No, my friend," replied he, "I have forgotten nothing. And well do I know that all Sara's previous lovers were rash, self-confident, ungodly men ; who presumed to dare a spiritual foe without spiritual

aid. They loved with unhallowed love one who in return loathed them as lovers, and who was destined to be preserved from them by the jealousy of Asmodeus, for her only lawful husband, who now seeks from thee his own predestined wife."

These words did not abate the consternation of Raguel. He had heard very powerful reasoning in all the previous cases; yet they had all failed; and his mind seemed now utterly impervious to words on that subject, and he replied: "O my friend, in this matter my fears must ever remain obstinate against all reasoning. Seven times already have I listened to reasoning which in each instance seemed good and true, but which all proved fatally false. I loved each of those victims to false reasoning; but much more do I love Tobias, and cannot consent to hazard his life, and bring his father and his mother to the grave with the bitterest of all sorrow."

"But, my friend, thou knowest that I am not the utterer of vain and specious words; and I pray thee still listen to me, and I will shew thee that we are here on this errand by the sanction and providence of God. It is ordained that Tobias shall deliver thy daughter from the thralldom of Asmodeus. Now listen to me: On a certain night shortly before our departure from Nineveh on this journey, I had a vision of great bliss. I seemed to be a ministering angel, with access to the presence of the Most High, in the uppermost Heaven. While I stood among my celestial compeers before the ineffable Majesty of God, waiting to accomplish His will, it seemed that among the prayers of the terrestrial saints which ascended to the throne were heard the supplications of Sara thy daughter, and of Tobit, both offered up at the same instant, and each praying, because of great sorrow, to be taken from this life to the everlasting place. In answer to these petitions God commanded me to descend as His messenger of Grace to heal the respective sorrows of the petitioners, and restore them to terrestrial happiness. I seemed instantly to reach the earth by mere act of will, possessed with divine wisdom and with power against men and demons. And a portion of my innate wisdom concerning Asmodeus, which I afterwards remembered, was that he had received divine warning, that the infallible sign of the end of his liberty on the earth would be when a portion of the entrails of a silurus burned in the bridal chamber of Sara; for he who would kindle the flame would be the beloved and protected of Heaven. Now mark this: the day after I had experienced this vision—for it was a positive experience—I met Tobias just leaving his father's house to seek a companion and guide for this very journey, planned by his father, who the day before had prayed in despair to be taken from earth, and so released from his many sorrows. The next day we started early in the morning and lodged at night near a bank of the Tigris. On the morrow Tobias bathed in the river before breakfast, and was leaving the water when a large silurus vigorously pursued him, so vigorously that it plunged out of the water on to the bank—a miracle. Here was a fish never seen on the surface of the water nor on the bank of a river, but whose habit is to wallow in the mud of the river bottom, remarkable for its sluggishness—the very fish

whose heart and liver were needed for the incantation against Asmodeus. And Tobias has with him now that potent charm which shall deliver him and thy daughter from the power of the genie for ever. Now, if more conviction be needed, ask thy daughter if she has lately prayed in great sorrow to be relieved from this life, and then know that we are here this day to deliver her from her sorrow, and to render her life a happiness and a blessing."

Still unconvinced, Raguel said: "This proposal is a sorrow to me. But, Tobias, my daughter is thine by right, and if thou wilt thou shalt marry her. But for the present let us dismiss sad thoughts, and eat, drink and make merry."

But Tobias said, "I will eat nothing here till we agree, and swear one to another."

Then Raguel yielded, still with sadness, and said, "Then take her from henceforth according to the manner, for thou art her cousin, and she is thine, and the merciful God give you good success in all things."

Then followed the simple and sudden marriage, thus recorded:

"Then he called his daughter Sara, and she came to her father, and he took her by the hand, and gave her to be wife to Tobias, saying, 'Behold, take her after the law of Moses, and lead her away to thy father.' And he blessed them; and called Edna his wife, and took paper, and did write an instrument of covenants, and sealed it."

The brief ceremony being thus completed, the feast which Sara had been assisting to prepare, became her own wedding feast. And the tears which she shed were not tears of sorrow nor of fear. As to her mother she declared, again and again, that Tobias was, of all others, the son-in-law after her own heart. And whenever her daughter wept she charged her to be of good courage, and not thus to give way to her fears; for all would be well, she was quite sure. And she called upon the guide to mark these words of hers, and begged him to have no uneasiness as to the fate of his young friend, for she was sure this was her destined son-in-law. So she had always said of the others.

CHAPTER L.

THE FLIGHT OF ASMODEUS, AND THE JOYFUL FINISH OF THIS BOOK.



WHAT sudden calamity has happened that Raguel has arisen so early and in great sorrow? Why is he up before the sun, and abroad in his garden before the ants, and before the birds have commenced their morning chants? See by the faint twilight what heaviness oppresses his brow, and hark how he sighs in the stillness of the morning; unconscious of the fragrant air which fans his hot forehead, as he takes in hand a spade. Looking around his garden, his eye rests upon a spot shaded by a willow: he approaches it and marks out the form of a grave; and while he digs he weeps. Frequently he stops to rest and to give expression to his sorrow, saying, "Alas! my son." Or, "O that I had been deaf to their reasonings!" Once he exclaimed, "O Tobit, my cousin—my brother, my weakness hath deprived thee of thine only stay. When thou shalt hear of it thou wilt curse me and die!"

Then is the genie triumphant once more—and against the angel-guarded? Raguel fears that it must be so; he has become so accustomed to this grave-digging.

When the sorrowful toil was finished he returned into the house, where Edna and the servants were now moving about; and he said to his wife, "Send one of the maids, and let her see whether he be alive; if he be not that we may bury him and no man know it."

So the maid opened the door and went in, and found them both asleep, and came forth and told them that he was alive.

Just then the guide came down and joined them, and heard this joyful news; to whom Edna, delighted, said: "Did I not tell you so? You would neither of you believe me last night." The guide smiled at these words and was silent; while Raguel heard them not for the fulness of the joy of the maiden's report, and he fervently praised Heaven, saying:

"O God, Thou art worthy to be praised with all pure and holy praise; therefore let Thy saints praise Thee, with all Thy creatures; and let all Thine angels and Thine elect praise Thee for ever. Thou art to be praised, for Thou hast made me joyful; and that is not come to me which I suspected; but Thou hast dealt with us according to Thy great mercy. Thou art to be praised, because Thou hast had mercy of two that were the only-begotten children of their fathers: grant them mercy, O Lord, and finish their life in health, with joy and mercy."

Then Raguel bade his servants to fill the grave. And he himself went forth with joy to watch the filling of that grave, feeling as he looked on that there all his sorrows and fears were at last being buried for ever beneath that willow tree. How his whole world had changed in a few moments! The songs of the birds, now in full chorus, were congratulations in his ears; and there was quite a new charm in the sunshine, and in the sweet morning air. He was in a rapture of gratitude, and longed to press his dear children to his heart. And when they came down he declared to them, with solemn binding words, that they should not leave him for fourteen days; and so liberal was he in his love and joy that he promised they should then carry home with them half of all his goods and money, and should have the rest when he and his wife were dead.

As to the genie Asmodeus, Tobias did exactly what his guide had instructed him to do, and while the magic smoke of the burning spell was rising, and Tobias was uttering an earnest incantation of prayer, Asmodeus, it is recorded, "fled into the utmost parts of Egypt, and the angel bound him."

As Raguel in his joy had solemnly declared that he would not allow his happy children to leave him in less than fourteen days, and Tobias knew that his anxious parents would count the days of his absence, the latter called his guide to him and said:

"Brother Azarias, take with thee a servant and two camels, and go to Rages of Media, to Gabael, and bring me the money; and bring him to the wedding. For Raguel hath sworn that I shall not depart. But my father counteth the days, and if I tarry long he will be very sorry."

This errand the guide faithfully performed, bringing back with him in due time the sealed bags of silver and Gabael as a wedding guest.

Some time before the fourteen days of the wedding feast had elapsed, Tobias had been due back at Elymais, and his father had become uneasy about him, observing to his wife:

"Are they detained? or is Gabael dead, and there is no man to give him the money?" And this uneasiness increased day by day, yet he would not despair of his son's safe return, sooner or later. But Anna would not be reasoned with, nor comforted, and said, "My son is dead, seeing that he stayeth long!" Then after another anxious day her despair would be more confirmed, and she exclaimed in her husband's hearing, "Now I care for nothing, my son, since I have let thee go, the light of mine eyes!" To whom her husband said, "Hold thy peace, take no care, he is safe." But she replied, "Hold *thy* peace, and deceive me not; my son is dead."

And her grief was so great that she took very little food by day and very little rest by night; and walked every day a decreasing distance along the road leading to the Median gate, shewing thereby that, after all, hope was not quite extinguished, for every time that she went that way it was only with the idea that she might possibly espy the travellers returning in the distance.

Meanwhile, at the end of the fourteen days, Raguel wished the young couple still to prolong their stay at Ecbatana, and offered to

send a man to Nineveh to inform Tobit of the happy cause of his son's detention ; but Tobias was firm, and declared that he must go at once, and personally excuse himself for the delay which had already taken place. Then Raguel gave him half his goods, servants, cattle and money, with his daughter Sara, and let them go with his blessing, saying : "The God of heaven give you a prosperous journey, my children." And Edna also blessed them, expressing the hope that she might see them both again, and their children, before she died.

Then they went on their way, Tobias very thankful to God for the wonderful success of his journey ; and Sara equally so, her great happiness being, however, blended with the natural sorrow of parting from her parents and friends. And when they drew near to Nineveh the guide said to Tobias :

"Thou knowest, brother, how thou didst leave thy father. Let us haste before thy wife, and prepare the house : and take in thine hand the gall of the fish."

So they went their way, and the dog went after them. And now Anna sat looking along the way to the Median gate for her son, evidently not having even yet abandoned all hope ; and when she espied him coming she said to his father, "Behold thy son cometh, and the man that went with him !"

And as they approached the house the guide said, "I know, Tobias, that thy father will open his eyes. Therefore anoint them with the gall, and, being pricked therewith, he shall rub, and the whiteness shall fall away, and he shall see thee."

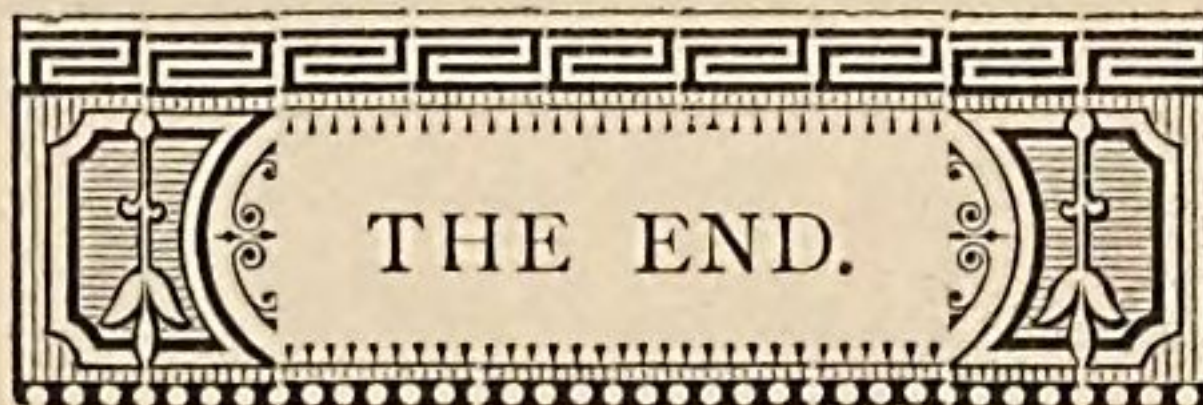
Then Anna ran forth, and fell upon the neck of her son, and said, "Seeing I have seen thee, my son, from henceforth I am content to die." And they wept together for a few moments. But Tobias was also anxious to see his blind father, and hastened into the house, to find that he had risen, and hurried towards the door in his anxiety to reach his son, and had stumbled and fallen, and it is recorded in the old writing : "But his son ran unto him, and took hold of his father ; and he strake of the gall on his father's eyes, saying, 'Be of good hope, my father.' And when his eyes began to smart, he rubbed them ; and the whiteness pilled away from the corners of his eyes : and when he saw his son, he fell upon his neck, and wept." And while with tears he thus cleansed his restored sight, he gave hearty thanks to God, adding : "Thou hast scourged, and hast taken pity on me : for behold, I see my son Tobias."

Then Tobias gave his father an outline of the great things that had happened to him in Media, and they arose and went out together to meet Sara and her retinue ; and met her at the gate of Nineveh. And all who saw the ex-Purveyor abroad again with the use of his sight were amazed, because the physicians had declared that nothing could be done for him. And Tobit blessed his daughter-in-law and made her great welcome, and it is written that there was on her account "joy amongst all his brethren which were in Nineveh. And Achiacharus, and Nasbas his brother's son, came. And Tobias' wedding was kept seven days with great joy." And it is further written :

“Then Tobit called his son Tobias, and said unto him, ‘My son, see that the man have his wages which went with thee, and thou must give him more.’ And Tobias said unto him, ‘O father, it is no harm to me to give him half of those things which I have brought. For he hath brought me again to thee in safety, and made whole my wife, and brought me the money, and likewise healed thee.’ Then the old man said, ‘It is due unto him.’”

Now although Tobias did not overestimate the services of his hired guide in this liberal proposal, it was certainly a noble reward to offer, on the part of both father and son. The ten talents of silver alone represented a sum approaching £4,000 of our present money, and it is probable that Sara’s dowry even exceeded this amount in total value, and the proposal fully proved that the son had inherited the father’s generosity. But when the guide had been sent for, and heard the offer, he revealed himself to them as one needing and accepting no reward, he being Raphael the Messenger of God, who had all along been the guardian of the family, protecting Tobias during his travels, and shielding him from many an unknown danger: also aiding the virtue of Sara against Asmodeus and all her human lovers.

“Then they were both troubled, and fell upon their faces: for they feared. But he answered to them, ‘Fear not, for it shall go well with you; praise God therefore. For not of any favour of mine, but by the will of our God I came; wherefore praise Him for ever. All these days I did appear unto you; but I did neither eat nor drink, but you did see a vision. Now therefore give God thanks: for I go up to Him that sent me, but write all things which are done in a book.’ And when they arose they saw him no more.”



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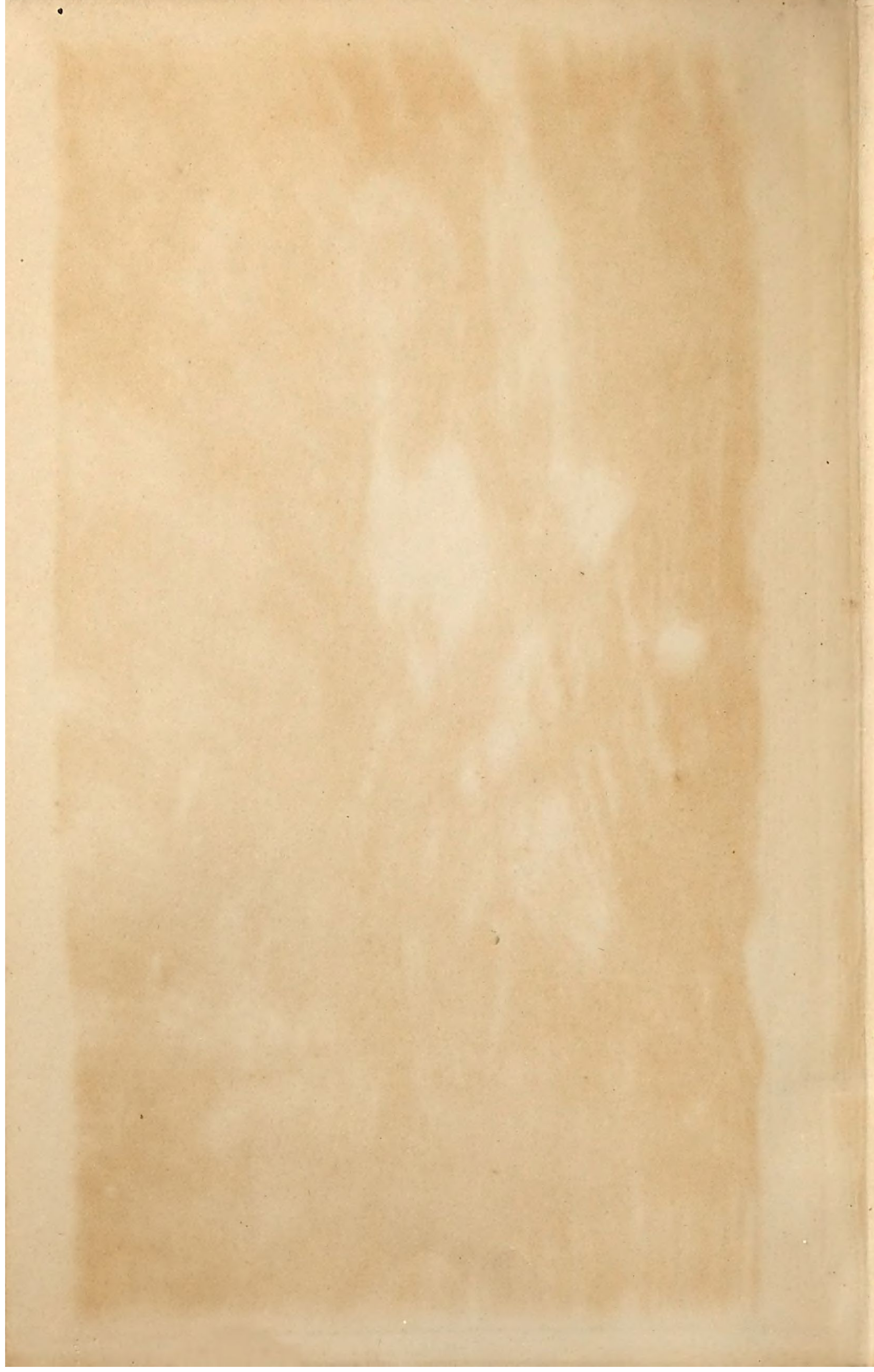
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Goss, William Henry

Hebrew captives of the kings of Assyria

London, Hanley 1890

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